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ABSTRACT

This book consists of the edited transcripts of 19 interviews conducted with two- and four-year college students ranging in age from 25 to 65, who returned to school to complete degrees, work toward new degrees, or merely take classes. Drawing from the interviews, introductory comments offer generalizations about adult students returning to college, suggesting that while many are motivated by career objectives and personal challenge, they also place importance on their spouses, parents, children, lovers, and friends. Many of the people interviewed had to overcome difficult obstacles to attend college, often deferring school for financial reasons or obligations to family. For many, the experience of returning to college was attended by embarrassment, fright, awkwardness, and ambivalence. However, overcoming these barriers resulted in an increase in self-esteem for the returning students. The conversations were often very personal and intimate, covering topics such as the difficulties in simultaneously going to school and supporting a family, the influence of spouses and children, and the impact of past experiences such as divorce and war-time military service. (ALB)

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Going Back: Adults Talk About What They're Doing in College and How They Feel About Returning to School

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November 13, 1988

JC 890 371

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This book would have never been written without the assistance of some very special people. I can and will thank them here. I doubt if I can ever repay them.

First, thanks to the people interviewed here; their generosity of spirit will always be remembered. Thanks also to the following: to Virginia Varaljay and Joy Fegus, who were so helpful during my initial efforts at typing and transcribing the tapes; also to Pat Hill, who picked-up on these initial efforts and helped me complete the work with feats of magic on the word processor; to Chuck Morrow, unselfish friend and patient proofreader; to Pete Ross and Dick France, generous and supportive bosses, and to my employer, Cuyahoga Community College; finally to my wife, Nancy, whose own efforts inspired me to undertake the project, and who willingly shared with me a writer's unstable times.

NOTE

With only two exceptions, the names of the people interviewed are their actual names; likewise, the names of employers referred to by these people are ligitimate and factual. In perhaps two or three instances, where some less-then-complimentary statements are made about an employer, I have substituted a fictitious name.

I have made minor changes in syntax and tightened up some rambling conversations. I unabashedly admit to eliminating some of my own banal, sometimes "off the wall," questions or responses.

Going Back: Adults Talk About What They're Doing in College and How They Feel About Returning to School

Like most people working for a living, I discuss how I earn my livelihood, or aspects of it, with people I talk to. As an educator, I have discussed my job with members of my family, colleagues and friends, an occasional bartender, my dentist, and various other people entering my life. These conversations were never all that frequent, or that serious, until around the late nineteen seventies. About that time I began to notice that more and more people were asking me questions about my job, and about where I worked. These inquiries were almost always from people interested in returning to school to finish "unfinished business"--that is, to complete started, but never finished, degrees; start new degrees; take classes; or to otherwise inquire about how my job as an educator could contribute to their lives.

This trend, begun a decade ago, has now become a serious movement. Everywhere I looked--in my own college as well as in others--I observed adult students attending classes, studying and conversing about their classes, or desiring to take additional classes. The more I observed this adult presence, and the more I listened to and discussed education with these people, the more I became aware of the mental and emotional conflicts many adults struggle with when deciding to continue their schooling.

This book is about these people. It is about ordinary, every day--yet special--people, ranging in age from twenty-five to sixty-five, who have returned to school.
What you will read on the following pages are a series of interviews which portray how these adults feel about themselves; about how they first began to do what they're doing; and how they feel about what their doing, namely--going to school and being students again.

Many of the people interviewed talk about their careers, their work, or their jobs; but careers, jobs and work, though significant and important reasons for attending school, are not the only motives involved. One will find in this book people talking about what they hold dear in their lives, and this most assuredly goes beyond what they do for a paycheck. These people talk about their spouses, parents and children, lovers and friends, bosses and co-workers; they talk about their present and their future, and in the process they reveal their hopes, wishes, desires, dreams, and daydreams. As we all know, children aren't the only ones who daydream.

While the principal reason these people have started, or returned to school, is that of job and career enhancement, it is, again, not the only reason. Enjoyment is the motivation for some of the people appearing here; for these people the school setting offers social and recreational opportunities to be with friends and acquaintances. The college campus in these instances becomes the avenue for recreation, entertainment, pleasure, and personal satisfaction. School brings personal and social enrichment to their lives.

Personal challenge is yet another reason for some people now returning to school. Some of the people interviewed here are at significant moments in their lives. They have fought through fear, the occasional false comforts of their routines, and, in many cases, postphoned convenience or pleasure to look to their futures, to set goals, and pursue them.

Some of these people had originally deferred attending college for financial reasons; others went through a process of prolonged maturation and serious, sometimes painful, self-examination as they entered adulthood, and never made it to college; still others never completed once-started college educations. Now, with these periods of life behind them, the memories and reflections of those times seem to instigate their present desire to succeed.

There is a similarity about these people--they are all back in school--but within this similiarity there are differences. Some people are moving more quickly than others; some are "slow but sure," but most, if not all, are at ease with the pace they've set for themselves. All are motivated, have direction, and have added a sense of mission to their lives. Each of them is curious; they devour learning-perhaps as a result of having waited for it for so long. Personal discipline is evident in the conversations. The discipline is newly discovered for some; for others it is regained. Either way, it brings with it reinforcement, accomplishment, and reward. It's the discipline required of each of us if we are to achieve.

Americans returning to school is certainly not a new phenomonon. Many families, in years past, seemed to have an adult member in it who was "going to school." It was likely to be someone trying to keep current with his or her job, or a single aunt or uncle, who, with time to spare, took a class to fill an otherwise unpressured mid-week evening. The difference is that that "audience" has expanded into the commonplace. More and more adults are taking classes, not only one class at mid-week, but classes throughout the week, both day and evening, as well as on weekends. The numbers are astounding.

Speaking of families, they are extremely important to these people. I make it a point in the interviews to ask about spouses, parents and children; however, more often than not the interviewees themselves bring their families into the conversations. Husbands and wives, or former husbands and wives, are most often referred to during the interviews. These references to families are invariably packed with feelings. Popular thinking to the contrary, seldom are family members opposed to another family member returning to school. Where there is a lack of support, for instance, pitching in to share domestic chores and responsibilites, it is usually the result of unintended, absent-minded neglect, and not active resistance towards the family member attending school.

There are, in the book, reports of embarassment, fright, awkwardness and ambivalence, particularly when these people initially applied and registered at the college. To begin with, the buildings themselves, with their abundant brick, stone and steel, do that to people. Our institutions are so "institutionalized!" But more about that later. What's important here is that a special time had arrived for these people. They now chose to participate and not just observe. They had decided to learn again, to actively enjoy life, and to grow.

The Interviews

So that the reader can have a feel or a persepective of how these interviews took place, a few words about the taping of the interviews are, perhaps, appropriate.

The selection of people appearing on the following pages was based solely on my perceptions and feelings of interest in them. The interviews with the Chinese-American, and the handicapped student represent nothing other than that they were there and of interest of me. A few people asked to appear in the book; I refused these offers on the basis that they may have brought with them a certain premeditation, or perhaps a bit of self-indulgence.

It would seem that a tape recorder could be an invader of privacy, or at least a distraction, during these interviews, but as the reader will find, the recorder quickly receded into the background and took its place in my office, joining, among other things, the desk, lamp, telephone, filing cabinet, and other typical office objects.

Recording conversations accurately has its limitations, and, for that matter, so does transcribing them; technology, as we have learned, takes us only so far. In this case, the technology used lacks "soul." A recording machine is limited to recording words, sentences and sounds. It is one dimensional, and conversations, particularly personal and introspective conversations, are more than sentences and sounds. So, while the recorder is competent when conveying sound-expressed emotions such as laughter, exclamation, voice pitch and intonation, it comes up wanting in conveying most feelings of regret, joy, happiness, disenchantment or disillusionment. Accordingly, the writer was only occasionally able to transcribe these emotions into print. In addition, the reader unfortunately misses the many smiles, frowns and winces, occasional tear, body movements, eye contacts, and other physical occurences that convey emotion and attitude throughout each interview. There is no doubt, however, that the recorder afforded more fidelity, memory, and ease of use than if I had attempted to take notes during the interviews, or tried to write about the conversations from memory. With this in mind, the reader is required not only to be a translator of these dialogues, but also an interpreter. He has to restore "soul" to these interviews.

There is not much, if any, in-depth analysis in these interviews and nothing symbolic or oblique in any of the conversations. These people present themselves and their feelings clearly and unobtrusively. There are, indeed, quite a few, "might have beens," "maybe ifs," and "if I had only knowns" expressed throughout the interviews. My gut feeling is that these thoughts and feelings were just waiting to be expressed, and I say that based on what Jim Swansinger, the older of the two retired policemen, told me as he shook my hand when leaving: "You know, John," he said, "you've asked me a lot of questions about what I'm doing here, and you know, I've wanted to talk about that; I mean what I'm doing here, to somebody for a while now. I'm glad you asked. I hope this interview helps what you're doing--it's helped me." What Jim and other interviewees have said about speaking to someone, I believe, lessens the anxiety of returning to school and in a curious way even serves to legitimize the endeavor in their own minds.

From the very beginning, when thoughts and ideas were heating up in my mind, I was sure that people would talk. I was convinced that people wanted to express themselves, and that given the right environment, and the opportunity, people would unselfconsciously talk about their lives: what they felt about themselves, about other people, about the world they live in, and about what they wanted to do with their lives. It is actually very human to want to do that. So, not surprisingly, people talked, and I became a questioner, a listener, and, on occasion, a gentle prodder.

Schools and Teachers

It is evident that all too often apprehension and the fear of failure are associated with education and schooling. As an older friend of mine said to me, "...to this very day I wake up mornings thankful that I don't have to attend school." That's leaving an impression! All of us have failed, but it seems that our schools offered us the opportunity to fail more often and much more publicly.

However, what we generally call education is vastly different today than what most adults experienced and remember. Our schools and colleges reflect our society; consequently, they, like today's society, have changed substantially from what they were in previous years.

We all know a friend, neighbor, relative or co-worker who is going to school. Some of them are carrying books and calculators in hand; others are "armed" with tennis rackets and dressed in warm-up suits; still others are toting art pad and brush. We are only just beginning to see these people, people wanting to stay abreast of newly emerging commercial, technical, and economic trends, as well as those wanting to be involved in artistic, social and recreational activities.

Universal education has given way to extended education. The mystery is gone! Our schools, however, do more than offer structured learning. The fact is they present us with feelings and attitudes that can be incorporated into our lives no matter what our age, sex, race, religion or lifestyle. For example, a sixty-year-old student said to me, "You know, John, I am mentally young when I am involved in this place; seems like everyone is interested in something here." Our schools, when all is said and done, provide even more than a place to learn and achieve; meaning and worth are also found in the unique value system operating within their walls.

Most educators have recognized and are attempting to address the unique problems of returning adult students. At our college the instructors teach these adults. In fact, they do more than teach; they help in many uncounted ways, and they produce that stability of environment so necessary for adults to gain confidence, grow in intellect, and achieve success. Contrary to the patronizing and impatient attitude some of these adults felt they might be greeted with, these people experience a willingness by our instructors to work with them--yet challenge them. And they also report a warmth, an acceptance, and a genuine feeling of comradarie extended to them by our younger students. Without exception, every adult student interviewed here reported positive experiences in their classes.

For a number of adults, these efforts helped sooth some ugly memories of previous attempts at schooling.

Even the most cynical and unfeeling of us enjoy being important and necessary, and I'm aware of several instances where the presence of these students in an instructor's class has rekindled a dormant love of teaching and learning which exists in the heart of almost all teachers. Our teachers know and feel that they are important and valued by these students.

Effort and Change

There exists so many payoffs for these people that hardly anyone experiences complete and total failure. An instance of this is a woman I spoke with who initally wanted to become a nurse, but at one point along the way found a job in a corporate medical clinic as an office supervisor. She was intelligent, and had a prior secretarial background. After enrolling in several medically related courses at the college--including anatomy, microbiology, and medical termonology--she decided to give office work another try. While not totally giving up her desire to enter nursing, she found her new supervisor's position far more rewarding than her previous office work, and is now thoroughly enjoying the medical aspect of her working environment--with a nursing career still a distinct possibility in her life.

To be sure, not everyone finds what they are looking for. Some have changed what they thought they wanted, but even in these instances, they have accomplished much. One fellow wasn't as sure as he initially was about majoring in accounting, but how excited and thrilled he was (and is) about his intellectual growth. He had finally proved to himself that he could compete in, and feel comfortable in, an educational environment. Over a cup of coffee, he offered me the following thoughts: "You know," he said to me, "I'm very much like the cowardly lion in The Wizard of Oz. For years I doubted my ability to learn, when all the while it was there. You know, it's so rewarding that at this point in my life, I'd rather be at the library than at a ball game--and I'm an old jock. I'm only sorry it's taken so long to arrive at where I'm at." I think what that fellow said pretty much sums it up.

But, a final word. While this book does not require much effort to get through, the reader will find serious and sustained effort shown by the people interviewed within the book, effort demanded of people seeking to become strong, autonomous, human beings. These people want improvement in their lives, and, each in their own way, they are reaching, pursuing, and growing.

My desire in writing this book was simply to expose what I believe to be the universal thoughts and feelings of ordinary, mature people hoping to improve and enhance their lives by the most available, affordable, and legitimate means possible. The book is meant to offer people a look at, and perhaps an identification with, other people's feelings and thoughts as they retuurn to school. As the reader will come to realize, starting or returning to school, while requiring the willingness to take a chance and expend effort, is not as difficult as one imagines, or as it looks, or as we make it appear. The people speaking on the following pages have made it happen, and it continues to happen every day in our country. That's my message. My contention is that if these people can do it-then so can you.

0103A

FRANCINE BEA

She is a divorced thirty-eight year old woman, majoring in computer science. Her job is that of a data entry operator at a small computer firm. We discuss her family: two boys who are musicians, and her former husband, who is pleasantly surprised about her success in college. During the interview she refers to being "taken care of all her life, and now having to do things on her own," or by herself, a situation apparently more women are finding themselves in as the divorce rate climbs.

* *

Interviewer: Hello. Thanks for stopping back. Are you ready to be interviewed?

Student: Yes. I was kind of looking forward to it.

Interviewer: Good. I'd like to begin by asking you what brought you back to school?

Student: What brought me back...well, I have been a data entry operator for ten years-in the computer field for that long-and I would like to further my education in that area, and make more money at my job.

Interviewer: What's after data entry?

Student: Well, data entry is simply putting information into the computer terminal. What I am trying to learn is programming the computer to accept different jobs, and explain to the computer how I want these jobs handled. There is also a computer operator's position. I could get into something like that. I was just more interested in the programming end of it.

Interviewer: Let's see, you've been doing this work for ten years, and this is your first year back here.

Student: Right. I started in September-Fall quarter.

Interviewer: What took you so long?

Student: Well, I was married and working part-time all those years-just sort of as an extra income. Now I am divorced, and I am supporting myself and two sons, so the money aspect is what initially drove me here.

Interviewer: Have you been able to support the family?

Student: Yes. We're managing.

Interviewer: And you're taking what classes here, now?

Student: I am taking three: Techniques and Logic in Programming, Introduction to Computer Systems, and College Composition.

Interviewer: When do they meet? When are you in class?

Student: Two evenings and Sunday afternoon.

Interviewer: Doesn't leave you much time to do anything else.

Student: No, between that and working...no.

Interviewer: Are you working forty hours a week?

Student: Yes, and usually it is close to fifty hours.

Interviewer: What do you do besides school and work?

Student: Homework! And check on my boys when they come in and out-they are sixteen and eighteen, so they're sort of on their own alot.

Interviewer: You mentioned the boys. How are they feeling about their Mom being a student?

Student: They are pretty excited about it. They are quite proud of me when I come home and say, 'look what I got on this test,' or when I feel good because I got all my homework done. So, they are real happy for me.

Interviewer: Speaking of what you got on a test...how are you doing?

Student: Pretty good up to this point. I'm doing well as far as the tests I've gotten back, and my homework. I'm afraid though that with the Techniques and Logic class...there is so much material that there is going to come a day when I'm not going to understand it all. I'm still not understanding it all at this point, but I understand most of it, or a good part of it. I just hope I can keep up with it.

Interviewer: Ok, so that's the tough one. How about English...have you handed in any papers yet?

Student: So far I have an A paper and a B paper that I've gotten back.

Interviewer: Did you expect that?

Student: Really I did, because a lot of it is vocabulary selected from the readings we do every week, and I've always been a reader, so that's where I benefit as far as anything in English. Vocabulary is pretty easy.

Interviewer: Was it the same in high school? By the way, what high school did you go to?

Student: West Tech. Yes.

Interviewer: What kind of student were you?

Student: Not that good the last couple of years. Just did what I had to do, and yet in my senior year I majored in data processing, which at that time was like a new thing, you know, twenty years ago. So that was kind of nice, but then I got married shortly after high school, and didn't work out in the field. I worked for about a year and a half after graduation. Then I got married, and had kids, and didn't work for a long time.

Interviewer: Why not college-why didn't you want to go on to college, or did you?

Student: No, I didn't. I didn't have any interest in furthering my education at that time. I just wanted to get married and have babies, and walk off into the sunset, and have it last forever.

Interviewer: Don't we all.

Student: Don't we though. Grow old together. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

Interviewer: One of the titles I had thought about using for this book was, "Funny How the Journey Changes Direction." I'm not going to use that title.

Student: What a nice line though; you should get it in somewhere.

Interviewer: I will...I just did! (Laughter.)

Interviewer: A little more information on the boys: How are they doing with their father gone now?

Student: It was hard for them with their father gone. We talked alot. It was kind of bitter for the first year-with my ex-husband and I. The first year-first couple years-there were a lot of bad feelings going on. We tried to be pretty open with the kids though, and not get them involved in that sort of thing. It affected them, but I don't think they were totally devastated by it, or anything like that. They still have a nice relationship with their father.

Interviewer: That's good.

Student: Yeah, it's nice. He's not like a lot of fathers who just left-physically left-and never returned. He still visits with them, so they're fortunate that way.

* Interviewer: Not that it's important, but has he given you any feedback on you going back to school. Has he made any comments...by the way, is this painful...would you..?

Student: No. Yeah, I think he's kind of proud of me, really. It's been awhile since I've been divorced, and like I've said the bitterness, and all that, is pretty much over with. When I first told him he said, 'Oh, that's nice.' I did pretty well last quarter. I got an A and B, and then, you know, re-registered this quarter. I think maybe in the beginning he thought it would be just a "flash in the pan," you know, 'she's going to take a course and that will be it.' Then I told him about my courses this quarter, and he remarked, 'Gee, you're really getting into this, aren't you?' I think he feels really good about it...that I am enjoying it and doing so well.

Interviewer: That doesn't surpise me. The women I talk to, who are married, when I ask that question, invariably say, 'My husband has really been supportive.'

Student: That's great.

Interviewer: I'm thinking maybe guys are getting a bad rap. The impression I get is that men are defensive about these things, and I don't think that is true in real life; I think we are mostly supportive of womens' efforts at developing independence.

Student: I think some men feel threatened.

Interviewer: I'm sure they do, but I haven't seen it.

Student: I don't know that it's a majority.

Interviewer: The women I've talked with-just as I'm talking with you-and I'm talking maybe, five or six women, report good support from their husbands, or boyfriends. No wait...there was one. But...

Student: That's good.

Interviewer: It is. You know, I was all ready to hear the women say, 'He resents the hell out of it.' It hasn't come to pass...How about your boys? Are they going to school?.

Student: My oldest son, Sam, graduated high school already. They are both musicians like their father. It's like music is all they care about. You try to tell them-especially now that I'm back in school-I try to tell them they need something else to fall back on. Like you said the journey takes many paths. Both of them think they are going to be famous rock musicians somewhere down the road. They are both very gifted, very talented, but I'm hoping that Sam reconsiders and maybe gets into...like a music college of some sort.

Interviewer: He probably will, eventually.

Student: From what I understand, when a parent goes back to school, it has a positive affect on the kids who are maybe at that age where they don't know what they are doing. You know what I mean, he's just kind of not sure what he wants to do.

Interviewer: Yes. I know what you mean. He's seen you here now, for what, two quarters?

Student: This is my second quarter.

Interviewer: Can you think back...can you tell me what it was like the first day ...registration. Was it difficult? Were you scared?

Student: I was afraid. I had no idea what it was like.

Everybody was great...everybody did their best to make me feel at ease. It was exciting, but it was scary at the same time, because I didn't know what to expect. As far as signing up and registration-everything went well.

Interviewer: Good. Sometimes it's awfully red tapish and it frustrates people. Sometimes we lose them-adults-they go out the door again. We're trying to prevent that.

Interviewer: When did the thought first enter your head about coming to school, and how long did it take for that thought to become reality?

Student: One of my girlfriends talked to me about going back to school. I think it was last spring. She suggested that I should maybe take a couple of classes, maybe...perhaps get a better job, eventually, somewhere down the road, meet new people, you know, all that. When she first talked to me about it, I was kind of humoring her saying, 'Yeah, maybe sometime I will.' Then she brought me over a catalog. I put it on the dining room table and that was it. A couple months later I passed by the table and just saw it sitting there-shows you how bad a housekeeper I am. (Laughs.) Well, I sat down and started thumbing through it and I thought, 'Boy, wouldn't it be nice; I could go back to school and get some kind of a degree, have a little more to offer, make a little more money, look a little nicer, and all that.' You know, all my life I had been taken care of by my parents, and by my husband. I was never really out in the world-until the last few years taking care of myself and my kids-to really see how it is out there, and how hard it can be, both emotionally and financially. So it was, kind of...it was to get me out. That was in the spring. I thought about it during the summer, and registered in the fall quarter. So it was about five months, or something like that, from the first time I talked about college to the time I started here.

Interviewer: When you got here you started with...was it English?

Student: Right, English and Introduction to Computers.

Interviewer: Day or evening...evening obviously.

Student: Two nights.

Interviewer: When you first walked in the door, did you notice anything different? Anything unusual?

Student: The door to my classes?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student: Uh, I'm not sure...I don't know what you mean.

Interviewer: Who was there? Young kids? Adults? Women? Men?

Student: Oh! A lot of people my own age. I was pleasantly surprised at that, because I thought I'd have to contend with nineteen-year-olds? Not that there is anything wrong with them but, they're pretty sharp; although, I have some of them in my classes too.

Interviewer: If you came here during the day, you'd see adults as well as younger students.

Student: But aren't the majority of young people here during the day?

Interviewer: Yes, just as in the evening the adults are in the majority. It reverses itself, but its a nice mix. I've got to tell you, the adults are making us better teachers and better counselors. You know we were used to talking to young kids who were, and are very impressionable. Now when we talk garbage, the adults tell us we're talking garbage.

Student: As Miss Sturik would say, "data validation," right?

Interviewer: Right. We look at each other now and say, 'Wow, these adults are making us work.' That's good because we have to stay sharp, stay current. So, you people coming back are really helping us out.

Student: Yeah. It's really big now-older students.

Interviewer: Exactly. That's why we're fumbling around here saying, 'How do we handle these people? Do we treat them like kids, or do we treat them like adults?' You know we're questioning ourselves too. Now we're not doing that badly, don't get me wrong, but we could be doing better-much better. We should have more services here-we do have a few-but you people pay the bills. You pay your income taxes, you support the levies, that's what we operate on. Well, I'm on my soapbox...so you went to class and saw adults as well as young kids. Was it kind of a rigid experience-were the instructors stiff, or were they kind of loosey-goosey? Did it remind you of high school all over again is what I'm really asking.

Student: Well, sort of somewhere in-between. I didn't find any of my teachers too rigid. You have that respect for them, but they are real easy-going.

Interviewer: Do they help you out? Are they helpful?

Student: Oh yes.

Interviewer: That's what people need to know.

Student: Both of my first instructors here were good. It was a really nice introductory quarter for someone who had been gone for so long. When you need any kind of help you can get it. I, luckily, didn't, but a couple people I became acquainted with would need help for this or that, and the instructors were always very willing...that makes you feel good...it makes you feel like you are a valuable member of the class and that was nice.

Interviewer: People need to know that.

Student: We do! It keeps us going.

Interviewer: You mentioned getting acquainted with some classmates, is there any kind of...let's see what I want to say here...I know when I went to college we did a lot of things together. There was always kind of a, 'you know, we're in this thing together here,' kind of a comaraderie. Any of that in your classes?

Student: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Coffee together...studying together?

Student: Oh yes, in the cafeteria.

Inteviewer: Complaining about the instructors?

Student: Oh, yeah! The tests. You know, 'I wonder what he's going to give us next?' It was really fun after all these years to have that again, because, you know, you don't have that when you are away from this kind of atmosphere.

Interviewer: This is a special environment.

Student: Yes, it sure is.

Interviewer: You can't capture this atmosphere, this environment, anywhere else. I don't mean just Cuyahoga, but Cleveland State, Kent State, or wherever you are. Schools are a unique environment. I talk with my colleagues-some of them think I'm an idiot, I think others appreciate what I'm saying-I say, 'you don't know how special this place is, and how much help you're giving people.' After awhile I think I become boring, but it's a special vocation, and I guess after awhile...uh, oh, I think my soapbox is showing again.

Student: That's okay.

Interviewer: So you finished the two classes and you ended up with an A and B. What did you think when you saw them-the A and B?

Student: Well, I had a pretty good idea of what I was going to get, but I am so proud of myself though that I want to continue and take even more this quarter. I'm now real anxious, like I want to get this going. It takes an awful long time.

Interviewer: It does. That's part of the process, that's part of the education...trying to stick it out. You get some terrific rewards along the way, but it's a long journey, and I tell you, we have a number of drop-outs. People do it, but its a grind year after year.

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: How about your English this time? Is it the research paper?

Student: Yes. I'm a bit anxious about the actual research paper, but as far as the class, I'm not having any problem with that at all. I like the teacher-he's real interesting.

Interviewer: So you're doing the research paper, and you need to get to the library. Where do you live?

Student: Parma.

Interviewer: Have you ever been to the Baldwin Wallace library?

Student: No, I haven't.

Interviewer: Take me up on this recommendation, this piece of advice-go to the Baldwin Wallace library. They are open on Saturdays, Sundays, and also evenings till about ten or eleven. I did my dissertation at that library. It is an excellent library and the librarians are very helpful. It almost doesn't look like a library. They have comfortable couches, a fireplace, a tremendous resource area, and journals. The only drawback is you can't take a book out, but you certainly can do alot of research there. I used to spend days there; they have a snack shop across the way...I recommend it highly.

Student: I'll try to get there.

Interviewer: Do you have a time period in which you want to finish? Get your degree, I mean.

Student: Well, I think about three years...going like half-time, three-quarter time. I'm hoping about three years for a two-year degree.

Interviewer: Closer to four. Three would be terific if you can do it.

Student: I'm going to try.

Interviewer: I wish you well, and I appreciate your time. Come on back and let me know if you need any help. Do you have a planner to follow?

Student: Yes, for the next two quarters.

Interviewer: Continued good luck, and again, thank you.

Student: Thank you. Good-bye.

Interviewer: Good-bye.

0250A

LARRY BRUMBRY

After completing a four-year degree in social science, this young man contracted multiple sclerosis. He had been a salesman, but with the onset of his illness, he had to return home to live with his parents. At age 35, he has returned to school on a part-time basis taking courses leading to an associate degree in Occupational Therapy. He would eventually like to earn another bachelor's degree-the second one in the health science area of Occupational Therapy. He explains his different perspective on education now, and his desire to become an occupational therapist, in large measure as a result of what he has learned from his illness.

Early in the interview, when he is discussing his illness, his mood seemed to sink a bit. He then recovers to a more or less even keel throughout the interview. He attributes his success, and the slow progression of his illness, to his determination to do well in school, and to his eventual goal of becoming an occupational therapist.

* *

Interviewer: I see from your records that you already have a bachelor's degree.

Student: Yes, although when I first went to college, I went because my parents wanted me to. I went to school for them.

Interviewer: Was it Bowling Green?

Student: No, Ohio University.

Interviewer: Oh!

Student: Now, I'm doing what I want to do. It's a totally different experience, and I feel good about doing it. I've been told I won't be able to do it though. I'm trying to break the mold. I want to be in a health career, so I chose occupational therapy mainly because I have worked, and I do work, with other handicapped people. I've observed both a physical therapist and an occupational therapist. The physical therapy isn't for me mainly because it requires a lot more physical effort than I can do, although I've wondered...sometimes...I've wondered the same thing about occupational therapy. I've wondered whether I'm actually going to be able to work or not. I've wanted to know, I wanted to ask...I seriously don't think I'm fooling myself, but there's still some doubt. I'm just going to take it day-by-day, and whatever happens, happens.

Interviewer: It seems to me that you've just asked and gave yourself a qualified answer. But listen, Larry, when is comes to doubts, you can fall in line right behind me. Let me ask you to go back a little bit. You went to school at O.U. You got a bachelor's a degree...

Student: In social science.

Interviewer: In social science. When did your illness hit?

Student: Well, the doctors say it's been a long time coming. I first noticed it about, I'd say 1980. Umm...I lived in an apartment complex down in Texas, the girl below me was a nurse and she was also a good friend. I had things like I blacked out once in the shower, and certain things weren't coherent or working right in my head. My friend, the nurse, told me to get to the bottom of it. I went to a doctor and when I first went he told me I had a brain tumor, but after several doctors checked, they found out that wasn't it. Then they came up with some kind of a cerebellum attack. I...since then I've been to the Cleveland Clinic a lot and they've diagnosed it as multiple sclerosis. I don't know. The whole thing is...I just don't want to stop doing what I'm doing. The doctors told me it was good that I was doing something. Not so much that it was occupational therapy, but that I had a goal and I was doing something.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm sure.

Student: They told me what I should do and what I shouldn't do. They didn't give me many 'shouldn'ts, there were more 'shoulds.' Their objective was to keep me out of the hospital. I had seen a lot of doctors prior to that, and I kind of knew who was good and who wasn't. I was placed in with a group of people with the same, or similar, illnesses. I've had a lot of group work. We had a physical therapist person and an occupational therapist. We had a psychologist, a medical doctor and a neurosurgeon. They all had their little niches, I guess you could call them biases but they were all very good. In fact, I was very impressed. They all told me what I should be doing and what they want to make me do. That I should get into a structured program, so that's what I'm doing. Every Friday, I go to a physical therapist. I go to a speech pathologist, and I go see a psychologist. That's basically my treatment program for right now.

Interviewer: You were in Texas. Can I ask what you were doing in Texas?

Student: I was working. It was just a job. I was working as a salesman and I got fed up with...I didn't like being mentally tired, yet not being physically tired. Of course at that time I didn't know I had M.S. Dad had a factory in Texas, and I decided that I'd go down there, get a job, and also get away from home. That's what it's all about, and that's how I got to Texas.

Interviewer: How long have you been working towards the Occupational Therapy degree?

Student: It'll be about a year this quarter. I started last spring and uhhh...I've just been taking...I was accepted in the program at Metro, but I chose to attend here and take as many classes as I could before going downtown.

Interviewer: Your classes here will count. They will fit into that program.

Student: Yeah, and so that's basically what I'm doing, I'm just taking classes that the program says I'm going to need. I want to go downtown for only the occupational therapy classes.

Interviewer: So then, next year you're going to be down there.

Student: Yeah, right. I've already talked to Mrs. Stolar, the lady in charge of Occupational Therapy, and well, we kinda' made a deal. She told me that I would be accepted into the program, but I put it off, because if I would have started then, I would have had to go downtown, and I wasn't ready to do that. So I found out the probabilities of being accepted the following year and they're pretty good. So I took a chance and decided to come to this campus. It's a lot closer for me.

Interviewer: Do you drive up from Medina?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: Any problem with driving?

Student: Well, not so far. But, I try not to drive in snow. I don't want to put myself, or anyone else, into any situation that will cause...like if it's snowy or it's raining, I try to stay away from driving those days. So when I do go downtown, I go up to 150th street and catch the train and take it downtown. It has a lot to do with...I don't...well, I trust myself driving, but you never know and I don't want to put myself in that situation. So this way, I can park my car much cheaper, and I don't have to worry about traffic or getting into an accident.

Interviewer: Speaking of finances and affording school, how are you living? Who pays your tuition?

Student: Right now, I'm getting Supplemental Social Security income because of my disability. You know a psychologist, when I first came back to Ohio, told me that I shouldn't go back to school; that I should find a job and try to do the best I could with the illness. I didn't agree with him, so I just more or less...BVR wouldn't pay my school tuition, but I wanted this. I'm doing basically what I can now. I'm living at home rent free and I'm not paying for food. I pay my tuition, books, gas and those other school expenses. If I want to go out to a movie or something, I pay for that out of that money, but I don't want to stay like this...that's probably the main reason I'm here. I feel I'm too young to be dependent upon Social Security. I want to make my own way and earn my own money.

Interviewer: When do you think you will have your degree?

Student: Well, I plan on having all of the prerequisite courses done by this summer. Then I'll have a year and half of the actual O.T. classes, the field work, and stuff like that. Then, when I get my associate degree, I plan on working for awhile, but I really want to get more than an associate degree, so I'm kind of planning on going to Cleveland State and eventually getting a bachelor's degree. The associate degree has been good, but I think as more people go to school, and the competition gets tougher, they're going to be be like LPN's.-you're going to need more education, more school.

Interviewer: Has Mrs. Stolar said anything about placement and your chances of getting a job?

Student: No, she hasn't really said. There are some things you can do. I suppose it's just, more or less, what I'm capable of doing at the time. Now physically I'm feeling a lot better. I still have my good days and bad days. The only thing that really bothers me is my speech. I don't talk a lot, so it doesn't matter... well, it does matter, but then, I don't know, I'm trying to get things worked out with my speech therapist and psychologist. Like I said, there are times I feel great, but my speech is the only real thing that bothers me.

Interviewer: It's not bad. I can hear you plainly.

Student: Well, I've been taking a lot of speech therapy and I'm kind of lucky in that I fell into this disease with a fairly high education; so, I kind of knew what was going on. The specialists in M.S. are used to taking care of people that are bed-ridden, or that are in the wheelchairs. You know, that are really badly disabled; whereas, I'm not bad yet. So, we're all trying to catch it before the worst does happen. The whole team is pleased because I know what I'm doing, and why I'm doing it. I understand a lot of things that are going on, and that helps a lot in both doing and what they require of me. I attribute that to my previous education.

Interviewer: In your doing your assignments, in performing in class, and in your study habits, how do you compare yourself now, in this program, at this school, with the way you were at O.U.?

Student: Well, I'm taking the two hundred level courses now and there's a lot of competition in them. Before, I mean like last year, the competition wasn't much, but now it is getting tough. I was concerned at one point about my ability to retain information, so I was tested at this psych center. I felt better after the tests, because they showed that I had good memory and good recall; so I'm feeling better about my ability to learn, even with my illness. Consequently, I'm not getting as anxious as I used to be about my ability to compete. Well, I'm going on about this, but I guess to answer your question, I'm doing well here. I'm sure it's because I'm interested in what I'm learning. Grades are important, sure, but I'm doing well without beating my head against the wall.

Interviewer: Was it that way when you first started school here? Were you cool and confident, or were you anxious?

Student: At first, I was even reluctant to come here. As I said, I had already earned a bachelor's degree. But, I was surprised at how much is here at this school that we didn't have at O.U....well, maybe that's not right. That's not fair; as I said, I'm more interested in my school work here. I love my sciences here. I hated them at O.U. But I wasn't too concerned or anxious when I started here. I was pretty confident about what I could do...that's not to say that at times I don't have some doubts.

Interviewer: What would you have done with yourself if we, our college, that is, wasn't here?

Student: I would have gone to Cleveland State. It would have been more difficult to get to, but that's what I would have done, but I'm really glad that this college is here. This place has been a tremendous help to me. My life is much better because I'm here. There is a lot of caring going on here.

Interviewer: How *are* you treated here? How do the students react to you?

Student: I've made tremendous friendships here. People are willing to share and give extra help here. I hope I'm helping people, too.

Interviewer: How about the teachers? How about the counselors and administrators?

Student: Really good. Always willing to take time to give something extra. Teachers here demand a lot, but they help a lot, too. I truly like it here.

Interviewer: Could we be doing anymore to make this a better place to be for somebody such as you; for someone with disabilities such as yours, to get an education.

Student: Well...I'm going to be honest. You're doing more than enough. I've seen people take advantage of the college. It infuriates me when I see it. There are people using wheelchairs here that I know don't need them. They're just lazy people-I know they are. They are just abusing the system and it's a shame. But no, the physical facilities are fine. I know you've made some changes here lately, and the access to the whole campus is very good. No, I don't know what else you could be doing.

Interviewer: That's gratifying to hear. I'll pass that along to the Dean of Students. Well, I do appreciate your time and your willingness to be interviewed-and your candor. Do you have any questions?

Student: Only a question on summer school.

Interviewer: What's that?

Student: Summer's are quiet for me, as a matter of fact, they drag for me. Is there much activity here during the summer? Can I get some science classes during the summer session?

Interviewer.. Yes, you can. We offer about 90% of our subjects during the summer quarter. The amount of sections per course is significantly reduced, that is, we may offer only one chemistry 101 instead of two or three sections. Other than that, the cafeteria is open, the library is open...we run a good-sized summer school here.

Student: I think 1'll look into it. Thanks for the information.

Interviewer: You're welcome and thank you again for the interview.

Student: Oh, I was glad to do it.

Interviewer: Good-bye.

Student: Good-bye.

0978I

MARGARET CAMPESI

Married her senior year in college, this woman had two children early in her marriage and consequently never put her B.S. in Communications to work. Her appearance at my office is the result of a well-thought-out plan: she would enroll in a master's degree program in education that would incorporate teacher certification while getting the master's degree.

Her husband is an accountant. She plans on being home with her children as much as possible while still having her own career and still contributing to the family income. She has requested assistance in selecting courses for certification and those which the university requires for entrance into its masters' degree program in education.

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Interviewer: Hello. You're Margaret, right?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Have a seat, Margaret.

Student: Thank you.

Interviewer: Do you know why I asked you to give me this interview?

Student: Well, about why I'm coming to school-back to the college.

Interviewr: Right. I'm interviewing adult students, twenty-five or older, to see why they are coming back to the Community College-what we're doing to help them and what we can possibly do to help them. More and more are coming back. You're going to see a lot of people your age here.

Student: Well, I want to pick up some classes so I can get a master's degree in education, a teaching certificate.

Interviewer: Can I ask you when you got your bachelor's degree?

Student: I graduated in 1980 from John Carroll University.

Inteviewer: Have you taught?

Student: No, I don't have a certificate to teach. This is all new to me. I was in Communications and had a concentration in Business Administration.

Interviewer: And now you want to start teaching.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Why?

Student: I'm looking towards the future, so when my children are in school, my work schedule will be similar to theirs. When they're out of school, I'll be home, consequently not digging up babysitters and things like that. I enjoy little kids and always have. The reason why I didn't go into education to begin with was that when I was going to college, that was out. You didn't go into teaching because there were no jobs...

Interviewer: I remember. There weren't many jobs.

Student: Right. I kind of threw teaching out the window. When you are young and not married, you just don't think about kids and getting married, and what you are going to do when you have a family.

Interviewer: If it means anything, I think your plan makes sense.

Student: Thank you.

Interviewer: I think you have a good background, and when it's all said and done, the money you make in education, for the amount of time you spend making that money--that is away from home--will be of much more benefit to you and your family.

Student: I worked at a hospital in the business area; I was interested in it, but I don't have the time to put into it now. I'd probably be stuck in some little job if I would go back in business.

Interviewer: Business is...it becomes your whole life. Housewives can hardly do it. I mean do both...

Student: No, it won't work out. I'd be unhappy and my husband would be unhappy.

Interviewer: I think you're on the right track. I just hope we can help you with the classes.

Student: I hope so. I hope somehow this is all going to work out because I really have my hopes up high. I've been trying not to, but they're up there, and I don't want them to come tumbling down.

Interviewer: The courses you take here, did you say can be used in your master's program?

Student: They're going to help, because I'm still missing courses--undergraduate courses.

Interviewer: Because of your business major.

Student: Yes. Right. So if I pick those courses up, then they're all going to flow towards my degree and teaching certificate, because its "Option Group Programing"--a combination of undergraduate and graduate courses. Everything will hopefully fall into place.

Interviewer: I can't guarantee that the courses I am going to tell you about will count in a Masters Degree in Education, but they are required for a teaching certificate in either elementary education or secondary education. I teach the Introduction to Education course here, and just received the new teacher certification requirements from the State Board of Education, so what I'm telling you is accurate and up-to-date.

Student: Okay, good.

Interviewer: I don't know what your bachelor's degree looks like, but have you had any psychology?

Student: No, I don't remember any.

Interviewer: Well, the requirement calls for one General Psychology class, which would be our General Psychology 101, plus 102-you must take both from us...

Student: Okay, let me write that here. (Student writes down the courses.)

Interviewer: You must also have a Developmental Psychology course. Now, for elementary education you would take Psychology 201, Child Growth and Development; for Secondary Education, it would be Psychology 206, Adolescent Psychology. I believe both would count for either type of certificate, but certainly the Child Psychology for elementary and Adolescent Psych for secondary are requirements.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: You need several courses in what we call Educational Foundations. Our Introduction to Education will count as one, but that's all we can offer you in that area. So, that's four courses we can certainly offer you, possibly five.

Student: That's what I'm looking for.

Interviewer: There is also the P.P.S.T. That's the Pre Professional Skills test, now required for newly graduated teachers. I don't know how it will affect you, since already have a degree. You can easily find out, though.

Student: I'd like to.

Interviewer: Here are two numbers to call. The first one is local. The lady's name is Peggy Humphry. She's in charge of Teacher and Personnel Certifcation at Cleveland State. She's in the Education Department, and her number is 681-2110. She can answer all your questions regarding certification.

Student: Okay. I got that.

Interviewer: The other one is for the Department of Teacher Certification in Columbus. Their number is (614) 466-3593. They'll send you the certification requirements upon request, and they ultimately certify you.

Student: Okay. Thank you for that information.

Interviewer: You know, we would love to have you here. I mean, we can help you, but may I ask why you don't go to Kent State?

Student: It's too far.

Interviewer: Ahh, I mean Cleveland State not Kent State.

Student: Cleveland State...to be honest with you, I was thinking about it; as a matter a fact, I was already to do all of this last September. Then we had problems at home; my mother got very sick and couldn't watch my children. I was back to the babysitter thing and was in a real jam. So we dropped the whole thing. I really don't want to go there, though. I don't want to go there because I would have to take the bus. I'm really not crazy about spending an hour on the bus to get there and an hour on the bus to get back home, and I don't want to drive down there. I guess it's security--I guess I just don't feel comfortable about it.

You know, I had convinced myself one time before that I was going to do this. Then something happened. I remember one time saying, 'I'm not going to do good...' and then I backed away.

Interviewer: It usually takes two or three attempts at it. Say, how old are your children?

Student: My son is four. My daughter is two, and it is real important to me that I spend time with them.

Interviewer: Getting to your family, you are married? I mean not divorced.

Student: Yes. Married.

Interviewer: What does your husband say about you going back to school?

Student: He's all for it. I'm really surprised. Not surprised--I shouldn't say it that way, but you know, money-wise it is going to be hard, financially, but he said, 'If that's what you want, go ahead,' which is really good. I look at it that it will benefit us in the long run. Somewhere along the line we will all be better off.

Interviewer: Can I ask what he does for a living?

Student: He's an accountant, a financial supervisor for the county.

Interviewer: I think we men aren't given enough credit. I've asked several people--women--that question. They all said their husbands were behind them all the way, pushing them to the end.

Student He's terrific about it. The only thing he keeps telling me is to make sure that this is really what I...you know, really want to do, which I can understand.

Interviewer: I want to go back to some earlier years. What high school did you go to?

Student: Byzantine.

Interviewer: I thought they closed down.

Student: I was the one that was stuck there when they closed down. I was finishing my junior year and going into my senior year, when they decided to close down--that was me. From there I went to Parma High. I went to Parma for three months, graduated in January, and then went to John Carroll. My brother went there. I'm the youngest, the only girl in the family, and I felt I had to prove that I was just as good as the boys were, so I picked John Carroll. I wanted to go there all along, but it was my, you know, 'I can do it!' thing, also.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy John Carroll?

Student: Yes. Once I changed my major, I did. I was in business in the beginning, and was really having a hard time with it. Then I changed to communications, and loved it. My last two years, I'd do all over again.

Interviewer: That happens. Did you marry while in college,or when you graduated?

Student: I had twenty credits to go when I got married.

Interviewer: Did you finish? Graduate?

Student: Oh yes. I sure did. That was a prerequisite. I wasn't going to get married if I couldn't finish school.

Interviewer: So you managed to finish school, get married, and have children. Boy, you did alot. How long have you been out of school?

Student: Six years.

Interviewer: Are you worried about coming back?

Student: I'm a little nervous because I keep thinking that I have to spend time to do this, you know, will I have my own couple of hours at night to study? Also, will I be able to do my papers. I'm nervous in that sense--will I be able to study and take tests?

Interviewer: Let me tell you: I interviewed a lady who was coming back to school after a long time away, a really bright woman. She never finished college--went as far as her sophomore year--got married, raised a family, and she came back to school. Her children said, 'Mom go back, we'll help you; we'll do what we have to do.' She said the help lasted two weeks. (Laughs.)

Student: Exactly. (Laughs.)

Interviewer: She said it was tough. She found she was coming to school, taking care of the kids, taking care of the home, and taking care of the husband. It really got to her. She got to the point--because she said she was a good housekeeper--it got to the point where she had to set priorities, and her first priority was studying for school. She said now the table is dirty, and the house is dirty, but as long as people can find what they need, that's okay with her. She spends time studying. So don't let it get to you. You'll find a system for yourself, and you'll give up some things, but do concentrate on it--a system, or a schedule.

Student: I think it will work out.

Interviewer: How about parents, brothers and sisters, friends...what do they think?

Student: The only one that knows is my mother and she's gung-ho. As a matter of fact, she's too gung-ho. She's all for it. She has me already out the door. She wants to watch the kids for me. My mother is a widow. My father passed away about a year-and-a-half ago, and this would be really good for her. That's why I want the college close, so I don't have to depend too much on her while I'm spending a lot of time traveling to school.

Interviewer: I think you're doing the right thing. It will all pay off for you. You also have enough support.

Student: My mother and husband are super. I haven't told anyone else in my family, nor my husband's family. I know my one sister-in-law will be really down on the whole idea. I figure if I don't tell my brothers, they won't tell their wives, and if they don't tell their wives, I don't have to hear anybody's comments.

Interviewer: You're...you know, Margaret, all of a sudden you're going...someone is going to hear about it, you going to school, and they're going to say, 'That's swell--how did you do it?' That's why...that's the reason I'm doing this, this book. I'm convinced that for every one person coming back here, there are ten out there that are afraid to come back. They may have degrees, or they don't have degrees, or they are rusty, haven't been back, and are frightened. If this works, I want somebody to pick up this book and say, 'Holy Mackerel, I'm...I feel the same way! She was afraid she wasn't going to have enough time. She did it. She went back for her master's. If she can do that, I can do it.' That's what this is all about.

Interviewer: Do you have any friends or relatives that you think would like to do what you're doing? Has this ever surfaced in casual conversation?

Student: Well, I have really tried to keep what I've wanted to do quiet. I've gotten encouragement from some friends when I was working. There was one friend who had gone through the business program--she was a social worker, and she went back to Baldwin Wallace and got her M.B.A. She came back and told me how terrific she thought it was, and how I would really like it if I did it. I haven't gotten involved with other people that much, because I've gotten some negatism. A lot of people will put the pressure on and say, 'Well, you're married,' or, 'You have kids,' or, 'How can you do that?' and, 'Your poor child, he's going to miss you,' or 'How could you leave him?' They really make you feel rotten. So what I have decided to do is just keep it quiet. I don't bring it up, and they don't bring it up.

Interviewer: I don't think it'll be as bad, or severe, as they say. You're not a single parent; you're a full-time housewife going off to study part-time. I think it will be ideal.

Student: I think it will work out. I talk to my son a lot. Since he's going to school, he thinks it's really neat, because Mommy is going to go to school too, you know. He is associating in that sense. And my little one--she's really too little. As long as she is with grandma, she doesn't care.

Interviewer: Have you reapplied yet?

Student: No, I haven't yet.

Interviewer: It is important that you go down to the Admissions office and reapply. It will take you about two minutes and won't cost you anything. Do you know how to register?

Student: I don't remember.

Interviewer: Do you have a schedule booklet?

Student: No.

Interviewer: Pick one up outside in the Counseling office. Find the class you want, and fill out the registeration form. Here is the form. (Interviewer hands the student the form.)

Student: Do you know if I have to pay today, or can I pay before I take the class?

Interviewer: You can register today, and take till March 19 to pay. Read it in schedule booklet. You have until that date to delay payment. If you register after that date you have to pay immediately. However, you can't do that until you reapply and become active at the college again.

Student: Thank you so much.

Interviewer: You're welcome.

Student: And thank you for encouraging me.

Interviewer: I'm afraid we can't help you with everything. I'm afraid you're going to have to take some classes somewhere else, but this part is beautiful for you. This will get you back...get you started. It's close and convenient.

Student: Yes, I'm hoping it's going to work out.

Interviewer: This will be fun. This is a challenge. You're going to really like this.

Student: I agree. I'm looking forward to it--I really am.

Interviewer: Nice talking to you, Margaret.

Student: Thank you very much for your help.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and please stop back.

Student:	I sure will.
Interviewer:	Bye.
Student:	Bye.

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JAMES CARLIN

This thirty-six year old Vietnam veteran is married and has two children. He is a full-time student in the Business Management program, and entered college after leaving his job as a result of being "bought out" by his employer-a local grocery chain. We discussed some of the details of his leaving the job, his two stints in military service, and some of the ups and downs he's had in his life.

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Interviewer: Hello Jim, I see you've been here before; when did you first start at the college?

Student: Back in the summer, June.

Interviewer: Why so long in getting to college?

Student: I was working.

Interviewer: Which was?

Student: I was working for Extra Value-a grocery store; worked there for over 14 years.

Interviewer: Were you laid off?

Student: No. I took a "buy out." I was working on a pretty good job for fourteen years and was going to...well, the company was trying to economize their business is what really happened. They were going to put me on the night crew and I was working on the east side in a bad neighborhood...well, to make a long story short, it seemed that things kept getting worse and worse and then one day my supervisor said, 'You're not really worth anything to us-you're at a top pay rate and all you're doing is talking to customers right now. You're better off leaving the company, or something like that. By that time things were getting tough in the job, so I accepted the buy out. I would be able to draw unemployment for a while and, hopefully, would get another job. I got another job, but it wasn't really suitable unemployment, so I figured I'd go to college and maybe get a few benefits I had coming to me.

Interviewer: Have you been in the service? Are you speaking of veterans' benefits.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: You know, I had another student, a lady who worked for another supermarket and she had been there eleven years. She said that at one time, if you were a man and Italian, you'd get promoted, but now it doesn't matter. The competition is tough, just dog eat dog and people are being wiped out.

Student: Right. They're buying people out. We need some kind of protection. They offer you $4,000-$5,000, but if you quit, you have nothing. After you're gone, our position is vacated, and they put in two part-time people at about half the rate. You know, half your salary.

Interviewer: And probably no benefits.

Student: Right, no benefits. At least until the first ninety days. The union wasn't helping us either. When the union lost me, they lost eighteen dollars a month in union dues, but they then picked up $18.00 a piece from the part-timers; see, they are getting their money.

Interviewer: I guess.

Student: The individual is the loser.

Interviewer: Are you married?

Student: Yes, I'm married.

Interviewer: What about high school? Did you finish high school?

Student: I attended two high schools. I went to River Park High School for a while, and I went to Central Lutheran for a while.

Interviewer: Graduated from?

Student: I took a G.E.D.

Interviewer: Before the service, after the service?

Student: I took, in fact, two G.E.D.'s. I took a G.E.D. the first time I went in the service in 1967. They required it so I had to get a G.E.D. The second time I went into the service was only for a brief period, but my original G.E.D. no one could find, so I took the test over.

Interviewer: When would you have graduated from high school?

Student: I would have graduated in 1967.

Interviewer: But for some reason or other, you went into the service in '68?

Student: Sixty-seven.

Interviewer: Sixty-seven. And they wanted you to take the G.E.D.?

Student: I went in 1967 and again in 1973.

Interviewer: When was the first time you got out of the service?

Student: March, 1970.

Interviewer: What did you do when you were discharged?

Student: I worked at a couple of part-time jobs. I worked for Pine Manufacturing Company for a while, and then I worked for Givitch Transport for a while, and I worked at Extra Value.

Interviewer: We, the college, have been here since 1964. Did you ever think of going on to college after high school? Did you ever think of attending college while you were in high school?

Student: No, I never thought of going to college while in high school. I was, more or less, thinking of a way out of school. I wanted to travel. I guess I was looking for adventure when I went into the service. In fact, I only attended school the first three months of my senior year.

Interviewer: Were the kids in your high school class thinking about college?

Student: A good number of them were. I'd say about fifty percent were going to college. I was thinking more of a job and money.

Interviewer: You were part of the fifty percent not thinking of college.

Student: Right. I was thinking about Vietnam; a lot of people were getting killed over there and I was thinking I should go over there too and fight for my country.

Interviewer: So, half a lifetime ago you joined the...was it the Army?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you go to Vietnam?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: How long were you there?

Student: Year and a half.

Interviewer: Did you...can you talk about it?

Student: Yes, it doesn't bother me.

Interviewer: Were you in any kind of combat?

Student: Well, not really combat. I was in a couple of places where we got incoming mortar a couple of times. One time about three o'clock in the morning they hit the ammunition dump, not much you can do except run for cover.

Interviewer: You were fortunate. You say you spent a year and a half over there?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: And then you came back?

Student: After I came back, I got married and started a family. I got married about, oh, nine months after I got back.

Interviewer: How long have you been married?

Student: Sixteen-seventeen years.

Interviewer: Any children?

Student: I have two boys, one is fourteen and the other is eleven.

Interviewer: How are they doing?

Student: The older one is not doing too well in school. The other is okay.

Interviewer: When did you go back into the service?

Student: I went back in September of 1973 and stayed until early 1974. My wife...I used to take care of a lot of things at home, and she wasn't used to having me gone.

Interviewer: Did you consider the service as a career?

Student: I was considering that.

Interviewer: But your wife just didn't like having you gone?

Student: Well, yes, but also financial problems. I was on a leave of absence from Extra Value and we were living on my military salary.

Interviewer: Oh, that must have been tough.

Student: Yeah. It was.

Interviewer: So you returned and went back to Extra Value?

Student: Yes, I was honorably discharged.

Interviewer: Then...well, how did you find out about our college?

Student: Well, I went to the Veteran's Administration downtown, and they said I had these benefits coming to me. I had been thinking about going to college, and this was one of several they mentioned.

Interviewer: Did you feel that your employment difficulities were caused by your lack of education?

Student: Well, yes and no. I had a lot of supervisors-like middle management people-that haven't had a lot of education. I know some of them didn't have a college education. Some only had a high school education.

Interviewer: Ok. So you went to the V.A. with the idea of going back to school in your head.

Student: Right.

Interviewer: When you first came here and filled out an application, were you nervous?

Student: Not really. I felt there would be some changes from high school to college, like needing some more time. I'm still doing my night job, and trying to keep up with the family, and trying to do my homework.

Interviewer: When you applied to the college and took the placement tests, were you nervous then?

Student: No, I wasn't terribly nervous. Tests don't bother me, although sometimes after I find out I failed a test they do.

Interviewer: You did reasonably well. You really did, for being out of school for so long. Who suggested the courses in business management. I see you are in them right now.

Student: Well, I was thinking along the lines of business because working for...well Business Management is my major. Business managers and supervisors get pretty decent wages and move up to pretty good jobs and money.

Interviewer: Ok. So, you got your schedule. Can you remember the first day you went to classes? Were you nervous then? You saw all these young kids here. What did you think?

Student: No, I wasn't really nervous. I looked at it more as competition then. I'm competing with the young kids. I hoped I could do well. I started, and did pretty good.

Interviewer: Better than you expected?

Student: Better.

Interviewer: How about the instructors? Do you think they looked at you as an adult and did anything different with you than they did with the nineteen-year olds?

Student: No, I think I've had pretty fair treatment. They never treated me any better, or any worse; besides, there are a lot of people my age here.

Interviewer: We're experts. Our average age is twenty-eight. I shouldn't say we are experts; we still have a lot to learn, but we're not new to the game either. But you're right, we have just a bunch of students your age here, and older.

Interviewer: May I ask this-are you comfortable with yourself here as a student? How do you feel about yourself, about what you're doing?

Student: I feel good. I am working as hard as I can on these subjects, but I am doing good. I have to spend a lot of time on school and family, though.

Interviewer: Sure. Sure you're juggling these things around.

Student: Sometimes I'll work four or five hours a day on homework, and just take a twenty minute break between subjects. I work maybe an hour or hour and half and take a fifteen-twenty minute break, and then go back to something different like English for an hour or hour and a half and take another break and then go to math.

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with the progress you're making?

Student: I'm satisfied with everything but algebra, I just...

Interviewer: Don't get discouraged. I'm telling you eight out of ten people coming here, your age, and even younger, say the same thing. Just get past the math; it'll hit one of these days; a light will go on in your brain; you'll pick up the logic of it all.

Student: I took Algebra in my senior year, but it seems like it changed. Different terms have been added.

Interviewer: Everything changes; education has changed.

Student: Right.

Interviewer: What would you have done if this college wasn't here?

Student: Stayed at Extra Value and taken the hassel. I probably would have stuck it out. Sixteen years to go for retirement.

Interviewer: That's a long time.

Student: Yeah, sixteen years and possibly going no where. We had no real voice in anything, and when people have no real voice in what the company does, they don't care.

Student: Speaking of giving people what they need, will you give me a summary here? Are we meeting you half way? Are we giving you what you need here? Are we giving you the preparation to possibly get a new career?

Student: I'm pretty well getting what I need. I'm now thinking of going to see this job placement counselor here.

Interviewer: Pursue that and try not to get discouraged.

Student: I'll try not to.

Interviewer: I'm looking at your schedule here, you've got your business class coming up don't you?

Student: Yeah, at 11:00.

Interviewer: Thanks for letting me interview you.

Student: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Good-bye. I hope to see you again.

Student: Thanks, Ok, bye.

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TIM DENNIS

A former Salt Lake City police officer, who had to give up police work as the result of a wrist injury he received while trying to prevent a suicide. He has enrolled in the associate degree in Physician Assisting--a rather rigorous medical program which requires a lot of actual clinical time. Married with three children, the move of 2,000 miles from Salt Lake City to Cleveland was a tough one for the family. He had been to a community college and to Brigham Young University and had good grades, so the academic requirements of the program weren't too much of a concern for him. What did concern him was the uprooting of his family, the costs involved in pursuing his education, and the change of personality traits required of him.

We discuss the problems and rewards of a mid-life career change. Throughout the interview he repeats his love for the work he had to give up-that is the work of being a police officer.

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Interviewer: Hello, Tim, have a seat.

Student: Hello. Thanks.

Interviewer: Tim, I'm interested in knowing how you got to our college. I know you're from out of state. I'd also like to know what you're studying here. So, I can only say, begin with whatever you're comfortable with wherever, or whatever that is, I'll jump in with some questions, ok?

Student: Well, sure. I came here to study Physician's Assisting after retiring from the Salt Lake City Police Department.

Interviewer: You're not that old.

Student: Oh, right. I was retired as a result of an injury.

Interviewer: I see. Please continue.

Student: Well, when I was injured, the implications were that I could stay on the force but would not really be allowed to be a policeman anymore. The police department, at least in Utah, took care of their own. They made an agreement with me when I first joined the force. They said if you get hurt or killed, we'll take care of you or your family. They were holding up their portion of the agreement when they told me if I wanted to stay, they'd keep me, but I knew I couldn't go back out on the street and work as a police officer again, so I made the choice on my own ...well, with my family, and we determined that you have to be happy in what you are doing in order to have a successful family life. So I, or we, decided to change my career.

Interviewer: How old were you at that time?

Student: I was thirty-three at that time.

Interviewer: Had your accident-and I am going to ask you to explain your accident briefly-not happened, would you be a police officer today?

Student: Yes. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was one of the best experiences of my life. I was able to provide a useful function-not very many people get to provide what I would call a really useful function in society. Most people make their way through life just getting along and getting themselves and their family through life. I was given the opportunity to...to make a definite impact on society. That to me was a real opportunity that not many people are handed. At the same time it was tremendously exciting and it fullfilled my needs for excitement and variety.

Interviewer: You were fortunate.

Student: Yes, I am really unusal in that over the ten years that I worked as a policeman I could probably count on one hand the number of days when I got up and said, 'I don't want to go to work.' Every other day it was, 'this is great,' 'what's new,' 'what's coming up for tomorrow.' Not very many people can say that after ten years on the job.

Interviewer: Your injury. Can I ask about it?

Student: My injury...sure...I was on a special vice assignment for two years; after that assignment ended, they transferred in a whole new group of men, and I had just been transferred out. There is a policy of rotation every two years on assignments. Well, I went back to patrol capacity for about two or three months and one night got a call about a man breaking into a house. When we arrived at the scene, it turned out to be an old boyfriend who was having a dispute with his girlfriend. He wanted to commit suicide, but he wasn't going to do it unless she watched. He was in the process of kicking in her window to climb in so he could shoot himself in front of her, when we arrived. We arrived, approached him, and he tried to escape. He decided he didn't want to commit suicide anymore, and he was on the second story balcony of an apartment complex with a walkway, I guess you would call it. I was down below underneath the stairs waiting for him to come out, so we could do what we call 'taking,' which means to disarm. He made some sounds and started climbing over the balcony; I stuck my head around and looked up as he was jumping off the balcony. He landed about a foot from me. The rifle fell on the ground about six feet from us, cocked and fully loaded-all he had to do was press the trigger to shoot it.

I knew from his actions up to that point that if I didn't control him, I was going to either have to kill him or be killed. Being killed was nowhere in my plans, and I didn't particularly want to kill him. I had been fortunate in that in my whole ten years as a policeman, I never had to shoot anybody. While all this was happening, he was on drugs-which I didn't realize at the time. Well, then things started getting out of hand; as we were fighting, he wasn't reacting to pain; he wasn't reacting to anything. I tried just about everything I could do to control him and nothing would work. Finally, I grabbed my flashlight and just hit him as hard as I could in the solar plexus. The impact of the flashlight stopping ripped the ligaments in my wrist. They were just unattached. Every time I clinched my hand, they would seperate and the nerves would slide down between the bones, and when I would release my grip, or grab hold, they'd get crushed between the bones. It was very painful.

At some point during the fight my partner got to us and subdued this guy. I ended up in the hospital for eight days and had two separate operations on the wrist to try and reconstruct it. Finally, they fused it. They call it a triscaffolling fusion, which is where the radial half of the wrist is fused while the alternate half can still rotate. I spent, I guess, five months in a cast and several months in physical therapy. I was then told by the doctor that it would never recover sufficiently enough to allow me to go back to where I could rely on it to do police work. Police work is fairly easy and most of the time interesting, but sometimes things get to what you could call the nitty-gritty. Even If I were willing to take those types of chances, the city certainly wasn't. They were honest and suggested that I should be retire, and I was young enough that I could change to a different career, so I left the force with a pension.

Interviewer: Sounds like the right move to me.

Student: Yeah. I like to think so.

Interviewer: You wrote us that you were at Brigham Young. Was that after the injury?

Student: That was before.

Interviewer: Okay. You have a very good academic record, by the way.

Student: Well, at one time I had considered going to medical school, always had kind of an interest in medicine. If nothing else, I had a great deal of fun taking those courses.

Interviewer: So you got there-to Brigham Young-and then heard of our Physician's Assisting Program. Is that what happened?

Student: Well, I hadn't heard of the Physician's Assistant Program at that time. Several years passed, if you'll note there (points to application) from the time that I went to Brigham Young till the injury occurred; I would guess about six or seven years. At that time I was thinking of maybe quitting police work and going to med school full time, but decided that wasn't in the cards at that time. I had heard of this program, not your program specifically, but the Physicians Assistant program through a friend who was a podiatrist. He understood how interested I was in this field-he indicated that after I retire, this might be a way to obtain further follow through on that interest. He told me that the P.A. wouldn't be...the time committtment wasn't as long as it was to go to med school-by a considerable portion. And he was right about that. So we were thinking about maybe sometime in the future, this would be something to do. It would have not come to anything had my injury and premature retirement not occurred.

Interviewer: Okay, so you applied to our program. We accepted you. I want to back up on that...we can return to that, but I'd like to know how your wife felt about it?

Student: Moving out here?

Interviewer: Yeah, well the whole deal...another two years of school, moving here with the children-was it three children?

Student: Yes, I have three kids. She did not like leaving California, well actually we were in Utah. We're both native westerners. We were both born and raised in California, and Utah is a beautiful place to live. It has the same general lifestyle that we're used to.

Interviewer: I understand, sure.

Student: The lifestyle out here is considerably different-not just kind of-it is really different and it took some getting used to. My wife was really unhappy when we first arrived. I was not real happy with the situation either. It took us a couple of months until we settled in. The kids were upset about leaving all their friends, even though they were going to make new friends. We had been living in the same house for six years, so most of their lives had been spent in that house back there. In general, their whole lives were disrupted almost over night. They were very unhappy about it. Although at the same time they were very excited because here they were moving half way across the continent to go to a new school, and live in a new city. That kind of alleviated some of the disruption for them. Two years is a...you know, I'm going to be two years older in 1988 than I was in 1986, regardless of where we lived.

Interviewer: Sure, and without the degree; I know what you're saying.

Student: Without the degree. You know this little talk has been good for me. I'm clearing up some thoughts that have been lying in my head.

Interviewer: Good. Then we're both benefiting from this interview. I'm glad to hear that. How long has it been...I mean how long have you been here now.

Student: I've been here for...this is my second quarter.

Interviewer:	Are things easing up a little bit at home...is your wife crying less? (Laughter.)
Student:	Yes, oh yeah. She's adjusted quite well to it.
Interviewer:	Well, it'll never be like the West, but it won't be as bad as you think.
Student:	We have several friends that we have made since we've been out here; they've also moved here from out West. They have said that after a period of a year or two, the Midwest grows on you to the point that maybe you don't want to go back out West.
Interviewer:	I think you'll go back, but I understand exactly what you are saying.
Student:	I don't expect to stay.
Interviewer:	I certainly do hope you can get back to Utah.
Student:	Well, I'm not...as much as I would love to go back to Utah, I don't know that it will be Utah. They are experiencing some problems back there with the schools. They have a tremendous...they have the highest per capita birth rate in the United States at this time. Their schools are just terribly overtaxed, and I don't see any real alleviation for that problem short of having tremendous tax increases. So, I'm going to stay well away from that, but I like the area enough that we'll probably be in one of the states immediately surrounding Utah.
Interviewer:	Okay. Let me ask you about finances, and I don't want to know figures; I just want to know if you are comfortable enough-can you make it through the program?
Student:	I think I'll be able to make it through the program. We had some real serious problems when we first got here. I don't know if you've ever tried to raise a family of five on less than nine hundred dollars a month, but it doesn't work very well. That was what my retirement eventually ended up to be. My wife went to work part time. This is such a clinically intensive program there will be no work for me. The people in charge of the program said that the failure rate is something around fifty percent for those people who do any kind of work while they are involved in the program, and I'd rather not take any chances. We have been kind of struggling along a

bit. I applied for my GI Bill because I was in the service. They hemed and hawed, and played games because I was...as you can see from my records there...I was beyond an associate's degree, and now I'm falling back and essentially starting all over again, and they were somewhat upset about that. It took the VA several months to make up their mind, but they finally decided that they would continue my benefits. That is a real help because although we will be not nearly as comfortable as we were in Utah, we will be able to survive without wondering where the next meal is going to come from, so to speak.

Interviewer: So, for the remainder of the program you'll get a supplement from the Veterans Administration?

Student: Up to about the last...I think it is up to about the last three months that they've okayed. We'll put enough aside to get through the last three months.

Interviewer: Family and relatives all in California?

Student: California and Utah.

Interviewer: Brothers and sisters?

Student: I have one brother; he lives in southern California. My mother is dead. My father lives in southern California down by my brother. My wife's parents are in the same city where my parents are. She has some family in Boise, Idaho, St. George, Utah, and Farmington, New Mexico. So, they're all out there in the western United States. We are 2,000 miles from the nearest family member.

Interviewer: Had you talked to anybody else about the career change besides your wife?

Student: Yes, I talked to several people.

Interviewer: Was it scary for you?

Student: Oh golly, terrifying.

Interviewer: What was your biggest concern? What were you most worried about?

Student: Well, the turnaround-just the entire turnaround-in my outlook on life. You know, going from putting people in jail, to caring for people...I guess you would call it a change in your approach to life. These two professions are quite far apart; they require different personality traits.

You have to be suspicious, cautious, and constantly aware of things as a policeman, because your life literally depends on noticing those things. You look at things from a more negative point of view than the average person does, because you're always, well, not always, but you deal with unpleasant situations. You have to approach things from a different point of view if you want to make it through your career. That's kind of a negative aspect of police work that goes along with it. Now I'm going into a job where caring for people.. where their most intimate problems will become part of my personal knowledge, and I'm going to be physically helping them with these problems. That change in attitudes frightens me. I've looked at it and thought to myself, can I make that big of a change?

You know, it has been eight years since I sat with my back to a door-literally. It has been that long, and I just won't do it. I walk into a restuarant and if I can't sit with my back to a wall, I won't eat in that restuarant. It happens. People walk into a restuarant, they got a beef with a cop, see a cop with a his back turned, they walk up behind him and shoot him. It's happened before. You form habits and attitudes that stay with you for the rest of your life. Some of them are sluffing off with time, but some of them will probably stay with me throughout the rest of my life. That kind of worried me, but I seem to be adjusting to it quite well.

Interviewer: Do you miss it? Do you miss being a policeman?

Student: If they told me I could go back right now, I'd have to stop and think very, very hard whether chucking all this and going back there now would be worth it. It's a lifestyle-it's not a job, it's not a career-it's literally a way of life. The relationships you form with other policemen are so intense, and so dependent that the comradeship is almost like a physical thing missing from your life. When your life literally depends on the actions of another person, you form very strong bonds in relationships. I don't have those bonds now. Yeah, I would probably have to stop and think very hard about going back.

Interviewer: So emotionally and psychologically you were concerned-not academically. You weren't worried about the academic part.

Student: Academically? No. I'm not really concerned about that. I can make it through that. I believe that.

Interviewer: You're fortunate because...

Student: Yeah, alot of people might not be in that position.

Inerviewer: Right. The difference between your responses to me and other people's responses are that most of them haven't had the academic background that you have. You've got a good one. Most adults are afraid of the classwork. Some of them are recovering from emotional traumas-losing their jobs, losing a spouse-coming in here saying, 'Oh, I haven't been to school in fifteen-twenty years.'

Student: I'm lucky. I'm very fortunate. I'm one of those people that always likes learning. I don't know where it comes from because no one else in my family is like that. I read a lot at home. I sit down and I'll pick up a magazine and read through it because I want to know. You can never learn enough-that's always been my attitude. I've been a student most of my life. Well, maybe not in a academic setting all the time, but at least in my own personal setting.

Interviewer: And now you're back in an academic setting; I commend you-I compliment you on what you are doing. In fact, I think what you're doing is dynamite.

Student: You do what you have to do. That's one of the things you learn from police work. Well...you learn that from life; maybe policemen learn it a little quicker because they are exposed to some critical situations a little more often than others. I think that...you know, I've been depressed several times since I got here; sometimes I wake up in the night and I think to myself, if I could just go back and let the guy shoot himself, I wouldn't care. You can clean blood out of a carpet, you know; the girl can move away from the apartment-why didn't I let the guy kill himself. And yet, I knew the risk when I walked into the situation. That was part of the acceptance of the job, so I can't really say that I would have changed anything.

Interviewer: Well, they are your convictions and your beliefs; you did what you had to do.

Student: Yeah. I guess.

Interviewer: Let me take off on this subject: I just finished reading a book on policemen being interviewed, Cops, and how they...I can't think...

Student: Cops: Their Job in Their Own Words. We used that in the police department-fascinating book.

Interviewer: Oh yes, it was!

Student: It was, I thought, a little stinted in outlook, though.

Interviewer: I want to ask you about that, there are so many police officers down on police work and frustrated with their jobs, and the divorce rate is so high, I want to ask you, has the accident...has leaving the police force brought you closer to your wife? Closer to your family?

Student: Yes, it has...definitely. There are things that she would never have been able to experience with me, and things that I would never have shared with her, as a policeman. We've broken down several barriers since I've been out of work, and we seem to be able to relate to each other again. I can't tell her what it's like to look at a man with a gun who's trying to kill me. I can talk to another policeman who's been there, and I can say, 'you know that feeling,' and he says, 'yeah, I know what you mean,' but somebody that's never been in that situation, you know, they can nod their head and say 'yes, I understand,' but they don't understand the fear,and at the same time they don't understand the exhilaration you get when you get out of it alive. So there was a lot of difficulty with that part of police work. You saw Star Wars, the movie?

Interviewer: Yes, I did.

Student: You know where they talk about the "dark side"? You can almost see it-it's almost real out there on the street. You step across the line-to the other side and people are not humans anymore; they're almost animals. There are, indeed, real live people out there whose sole purpose in life is evil-I've met them, I've dealt with them several times, and they just terrrify me, but they're out there. How do you explain that-how do you relate that to your family? You can't. It's very detrimental to family life. I've been married for twelve years, and while I was in police work, we nearly got divorced three times. I can lay the whole thing right at the foot of the police job-all three times.

Interviewer: I don't think you are that unusual. I'm thinking back, that book, you know, Cops....

Student: I know policemen that are married two or three times. Some swear off marriage entirely, and just bag it and remain single. A good percentage of them are doing that now because the lifestyle is just not conducive to family life.

Interviewer: I guess you've got to be a superhuman being to make it work.

Student: There are some, I've met some of them. In fact, I have a very good friend who just retired after twenty-five years in the police department, and has a wonderful marriage. He's become a minister in his church and is a super person. He's one of the success stories, but I think he would have probably been a success story no matter what he did for a living.

Interviewer: Uh, huh.

Student: There are few of them around.

Interviewer: Do you think that you are going to be as good a physician's assistant as you were a police officer?

Student: I have no doubt that I'll be a good physician's assistant. That may sound a little smug. (Laughs.)

Interviewer: No, it doesn't at all.

Student: I have the confidence. I can get through it. On the other hand, you know, there's always an occasional doubt.

Interviewer: Sure.

Student: I'm sure that it's all been for the best. If nothing else, my wife and family and I will be much closer than we were. I think that's a gift beyond price right there. I've never been one of those people that was driven to work and didn't care about family.

Interviewer: You may have an occasionaly doubt, but I don't. I don't say that just because you're right here. You'll have no problem getting through it. You'll have to work and you'll be a successful physicians assistant, I know you will.

Student: I hope that that is the case...I think that it will be. I'm a firm believer in that you never really know your own limits. You see so many people say, 'I just can't do it,' and just give up. You'd be surprised what people can do when they really want to do it. Somebody once told me that the difference between a winner and a loser is that the winner gets up one more time than the loser. I think that is true. I've seen that. As long as you keep walking down the road, it might knock you down, but you get back up and you walk on.

Interviewer: I appreciate your time.

Student: Thanks...I appreciate you listening. This has been fascinating for me.

Interviewer: You're a fascinating guy..

Student: Thanks. I'd like to see this in print.

Interviewer: You will...although, like you, there is an occasional doubt on my part. At any rate, thank you for your time and your candor.

Student: Your're welcome.

Interviewer: Good-bye and good luck.

Student: Good-bye.

RANDALL FITZSIMMONS

At twenty-six years old this young man works on a set-up crew at the Richfield Coliseum, a large sports/entertainment complex between Cleveland and Akron. The work is heavy, and while well-paying, it is seasonal. He is married to a school teacher and although they have no children, they eventually plan to have one or two. He always felt that he was not the "college type" and consequently, resisted attending college on several occasions which, in retrospect, he now feels, might have been more opportune or in some way easier than right now.

His wife is the instigator and catalyst of his attempt at going back to school. He recalls how he depended on her for help in trying to get through the initial stages of admissions to the college.

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Interviewer: Hello. Is that chair okay? You're taller than I am.

Student: The chair is fine. I'm not so sure about me though. (Laughter.)

Interviewer: I'll be gentle! Thanks for coming in.

Student: Sure.

Interviewer: Randall, I'd like to begin by asking you how long you've been out of high school.

Student: Let's see, I'm twenty-six now so it's...about seven years...seven years since I graduated.

Interviewer: Did you think about going to college then?

Student: No. I...I didn't want to go to college. I didn't see that I was going to need college to make a living. I thought that I could go out and become a laborer and make all the money I ever wanted, but it didn't turn out that way.

Interviewer: Well, sometimes it does. There are some pretty successful people out there...

Student: Well, yeah.

Interviewer: Your parents, did they want you to continue your education?

Student: They encouraged me to go to school, but said it had to be my decision. I had to earn my way through college, though, because my parents were aware of the job that I had in high school and after high school. I was a welder; learned it in high scholl and made good money. They said to me, 'You can stay here as long as you want to, but you have to earn your way through college, because we think, from what you've done in high school, that you can pay for college yourself. It's up to you.'

Interviewer: Did you?

Student: No, not right out of high school. After high school I started right in the factory. It must have been a week after graduating. I was making decent money, for a high school graduate, in welding. I was the first of thirty-two new workers to be hired by the company and the last of thirty-two to go in a layoff. The job lasted approximately eleven months. There was no forewarning. It just came as a pink slip one day and that's how the job ended-as quickly as it began. No notification came.

Interviewer: This was...?

Student: It was 1979. The year I graduated.

Interviewer: Was it a large corporation? Job shop? Supplier?

Student: It was a pretty good size company. We welded on the last thousand foot new conveyor that was used at Firestone Tire and Rubber. We were building hydraulic tire conveyors. At first, it sounded great. I mean, you know, you see all this conveyor sitting in front of you that is going into this world-wide company, so really we felt pretty important...I mean the workers...we felt that we were helping out and helping the town we lived in.

Interviewer: So that lasted about eleven months or so, then it went caput.

Student: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: Then what did you do?

Student: I didn't know what to do. I felt that welding was going to be my career, but all the decent jobs required from three to five years experience in welding. All I had was my high school welding experience, part-time job experience, and nine months of actual field work to show that I was experienced in welding. There were welders out there that had five, ten, and fifteen years experience. They were getting whatever jobs there were. I...in the time I was laid off I applied to probably...I'd say thirty-thirty-five jobs. Mostly trades, such as welding, construction, things like that. I thought that I could pick up another trade. I should have probably gone to college right then, when I lost my job. I was only out of high school eleven-twelve months. I made a mistake; I should have done it then.

Interviewer: Ok. Now what did you do? How long were you without a job?

Student: I was without a job about four months after losing the welding job. Then I picked up another trade. It was heating and air conditioning work-that is as tough as factory assembly line work. The company was small and they wanted me to start learning to install, and I did. I got to put in furnaces and duct work and bend duct work. I thought, 'this is where I get to use my learning in the shop, and then go out and put the jobs in.' I thought that since I was installing, that I would always install with this company and work that way. In the summertime, you know, there's air conditioning, and in the winter there's heating. But, it didn't work out that way-another layoff. I lasted approximately a year with that company. I was then told that maybe my best chance would be to try the plumbing union where you can learn plumbing as an apprentice while going to school, but you run into a bunch of problems and dead ends like, for example, plumbing apprenticeships open up every two years, and I was in between the years. I looked into the trade schools but they weren't really offering anything I wanted, and it cost lots of money for what they were offering.

Interviewer: Kind of depressing? I mean was it a tough time?

Student: Very depressing. You feel that you missed something along the way, that maybe you just weren't good enough. I was young, yeah, but where was my future? There was no future involved. It was tough. I was glad I wasn't married.

Interviewer: Had you thought about going to college then?

Student: Well, there were a lot of people around me that weren't going to school...I kind of identified with them. I didn't...I didn't want school even then because I thought I could earn more money doing my own thing with my own hands. Also, you'd read in the papers about that...there were so many people graduating from colleges, but they couldn't get jobs and that we weren't going to be needing these professionals. I mean, college really wasn't the way that I thought I should go. I thought that I would do much better by just staying in a field and making sure that I had the job that somebody else was studying for at the time.

Interviewer: I understand. Let me jump a little here. You said you weren't married? When did you get married?

Student: I was married in August of '83. We're talking approximately four years after I graduated. As a matter of fact, when I met my wife in '82, in February of '82, I was laid off, and she was a college student, at Kent State University. One of the things that hit me was my wife was from southern Ohio, down where a lot of people don't go to college. They can't afford it. Those that do go, go away to college to study and be away from Mom and Dad for awhile. Something that I thought was...something that I really envied; you know, her being away from her parents like that, and to work so hard at something that was so far in the future. I could tell that this woman that I had met was going to graduate from college, and she was going to work in her field, because that was her goal. She had set goals for herself in high school and...

Interviewer: Had the discipline to do it.

Student: You got it. She'd prepared herself in high school and went right to college, 'cause she knew down around the mining towns of southern Ohio there was going to be nothing for her but...a little dead end job that was not going to make her happy. I was really taken with that. She's quite a person. That would have been another good time to begin college, but then I had no idea what I wanted to be. I guess I was always looking for somebody to push me a little bit more. Everybody...my family told me, 'Oh, you'll do great in college', but telling me that I would do great, and me taking the initiative to go out and check into college was two different things; but, I didn't feel that I could afford it at the time, and I just didn't think I could get anything out of college, and...maybe...maybe I was just afraid.

Interviewer: Maybe, but that's not unusual. Don't feel that you're alone in that. When did you get married?

Student: About a year and a half later. We were engaged in the fall of '82 and we were going to be married in August of '83. My wife was going to finish school in June of '83: this way she could graduate and pursue her career in teaching.

Interviewer: Did you have a job?

Student: I had just begun my present job in February when we were engaged. I got my job at the Coleseum around the time we got engaged. It was a real boost for me, you know, getting the job after being laid off for so long. I guess I should also tell you that I was in a serious car accident in '81. I broke my hip, and was in the hospital for quite awhile. I had to go through a lot of physical therapy.

Interviewer: I didn't notice anything...

Student: No, really, it's feeling great. I mean, you know, I did very physical work since then and it's never bothered me. But when I was laid up-that was another time when I should have pursued college. I should have since I couldn't work for a period of time there. College would have been a good choice...I mean a good time to start because of the broken hip. I might have never been able to do the heavy work again, although I thought that after physical therapy that, you know, you hear that you'll be on your feet in no time. You'll be back on the job working within a few weeks or so.

Interviewer: You really...you really didn't want to get here. (Laughter.) I think you'll enjoy it here.

Student: I had quite a few people tell me that I would enjoy a community college, you know. I'm working my way through, and it's close to my home.

Interviewer: Let's see here, your pursuing a Mechanical Technology degree, right?

Student: Right. I think that it's an associate of science degree.

Interviewer: Right. (Interviewer looks through the student's folder.) Here's your application and high school transcript, so now we're up-to-date here.

Interviewer: I'd like to know how you felt when you first walked into the building.

Student: Had to bring my wife with me. (Laughter.) She'd already graduated from college and, you know, here again, I needed somebody...that somebody behind me, pushing and besides, she had already been through what I was now trying to do. But to answer your question-I was scared.

Interviewer: That's not unusual. It is scary for most adult students. Now answer me this: Did we scare you? Did we put you off, or anything like that, 'cause we need to know.

Student: Oh no. You know, I really didn't want to drive to college to talk to a counselor that evening, but when I left, I thought, 'Wow, that was pretty good.' He told me I'd have to come back and take the placement test. I said to myself, 'Hey, you're going to have to do that, you know.' So, I called up the college myself and made the appointment for the test. I thought, 'Wow, here I am making an appointment for something that three years ago I wouldn't have dreamed of doing.' And I did it. I took the test.

Interviewer: It's called maturity. Well, maybe I was too quick with that. There are times when it's a more complex issue...

Student: I think that's what we're talking about in my case. I started talking about college a little while after I met my wife. I said I was going to go. Then I made up excuses. I said that work was stopping me, and that me and my wife were just married, and we'd like to travel, and that would get in the way, and there I was doing it. But, I was making halfway decent money. We were both working. Gradually, it began to sink in that my wife is going to want to have some children, and I'm going to want to have children. I didn't want her to be the one that does everything in the marriage, so we talked quite a bit about it and she said she wanted to work in her field, that is teaching, for five or six years and then have some children. She wanted a husband that could support those children, you know, and if she wanted to go back to work, she could. If she didn't want to, she didn't have to because I'd have a decent, secure job.

Interviewer: You're going to have a lot to talk to her about. This is really...really, this is going to contribute a lot to your marriage. I mean, you and she are going to sit and have fun with this.

Student: I know that. We talk a lot about it already.

Interviewer: It'll be work, but you're going to enjoy it. There are big dividends here.

Student: Exactly. I'm going to have something new to come home to at night to talk about. I'll have...I'll have something I'm studying for, something to work towards. Watching television has gotten very boring these last couple years. You can watch the clock from after work until 11:00 at night and wonder where you time went? So much time down the drain.

Interviewer: You're right. I think a lot of people share your sentiments.

Interviewer: We've talked about your wife and your parents. Any problems at work? Do the fellows at work know that you're going to college?

Student: I told my boss. He doesn't really want to hear that he's going to lose another guy to school. We have two guys in our crew, its a seven-man crew, that are taking classes now. One is also at Akron University and, well...the other one is at Akron as a matter of fact. It can present problems, for instance, when people want certain days off. But our shop is probably designed for people who want to go to school: You're laid off in the summertime; there's a lot of hours in the wintertime, and its hard work, but in the summertime, there's very little work. I mean we have probably...I would say...only ten percent of our yearly work during the summer. I could go to school full time in the summer if I wanted to.

Interviewer: You're fortunate to have a job, and even more fortunate to have such a job.

Student: I know. Can I ask you about the students. Are there many my age doing what I'm trying to do?

Interviewer: Yup. If you're going to be here during the day, you'll see maybe...about twenty percent of your classes will be your age or older; if you're here evenings, or on weekends, you'll be one of the younger students. Randall, it's only natural that you're anxious about competing with the younger students. You'll see that they have some skills, and techniques and habits that you don't have. You had them once and they will return, but it'll take time; don't get discouraged. The first quarter will be your toughest. You'll make some mistakes: maybe spend a lot of time on some relatively unimportant topic, or you'll prepare all wrong for a test, but you'll begin to develop a "sense" about your academic work. You'll soon recognize what the important material is...what's important to your instructors. It'll come. Stay concerned and be anxious about doing well, but don't get carried away with worry...you'll do well. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about.

Student: Well, I'm at that point in my life where I truly want this. I want to finish college. I want to, in a few years, look back and say,'Wow, I really did it, and it was worth my time.' The time I took to learn something was worth it...well worth it!

Interviewer: Let me...before we run out of time...offer you an analogy that may help you: It's the game of baseball. This quarter you're going to hit a single. This time at bat you're going to get a single; you may even get a double. But you're at least going to get a single, and that gets you on base. Once you're on base anything can happen. The first quarter is when you learn to pace yourself. You learn how long the base path is to first base. Once on base you have a different perspective and will be more comfortable with all the base paths. You'll be right. I'm confident you'll do it. Before you know it, you're going to be rounding third, headed for home plate while the ball is still rolling towards the 400 ft. sign.

Student: I'm really excited about it.

Interviewer: I've enjoyed talking with you.

Student: Very nice talking to you, too.

Interviewer: Thanks for coming in.

Student: Thank you. So long.

Interviewer: Bye.

BETTY GIESEL

A former legal secretary who had been working for a struggling law firm and also as a computer sales person since graduating high school, she had been thinking of making some drastic changes in her life when a serious injury - an injury to her right hand - caused her to finally commit herself to returning to school. The accident became a catalyst for leaving her job, breaking up with her boyfriend and moving back home to her mother's house. She is taking the courses required for acceptance into both the Physical Therapy Assisting and Registered Nursing programs.

The discussion moves from her secretarial job at the law firm, to her accident, to her relationship with her former boyfriend on to delightful anecdote about a recent date with a lawyer she previously worked for, and finally to a textbook doctor patient relationship with the plastic surgeon who is treating her injury. She had originally talked with me in our registration area. At that time I asked her if I could interview her.

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Interviewer: Good morning...oops, good afternoon. Where did the morning go? Thank you for coming in. Let's see, Physical Therapy Assisting, right? That's what your application says.

Student: Um...either physical therapy or maybe nursing.

Interviewer: That's fine, but it'll be awhile; you're first accepted by the college - which you have been, then after the completion of specific courses, you're eligible for admission to the nursing or physical therapy programs.

Student: I see.

Interviewer: We'll begin this quarter with the anatomy and the English. O.K.? The English you tested into.

Student: O.K.

Interviewer: Please excuse me for being so direct, but were you in some kind of accident? I see you have trouble manipulating your hand. It'll be critical to the program - to your acceptance into a program - that you have full use of your hand. Will you?

Student: I think so. I'm told I will.

Interviewer: Good...uh...I'm looking at your high school record; it's a decent record. Can I inquire why you didn't attend college right after high school?

Student: Well, basically, I wanted money to get a car, buy clothes..., but along with that I didn't have any real direction. I didn't know what I would like to major in, or what I'd be doing with my life.

Interviewer: Would it be fair to say that you just wanted school to be over with?

Student: Yes, that would be accurate. I wasn't interested in school, although I'm disappointed with myself now. I really am because I know that if I would have applied myself, I could have done well. I remember my biology partner was so much fun and we had the best times, but I don't remember anything...any biology, that is.

Interviewer: Was it a he or a she? The reason I ask is my partner was a she and we dated a few years later after that class.

Student: Oh, she. I still see her.

Interviewer: Well, you wanted to get out and get a job. Did you do that?

Student: Yes. A secretary/receptionist job.

Interviewer: Which was... did you say six years ago?

Student: Nine.

Interviewer: Nine years of being a secretary in one place?

Student: No. I think six different places. Shows you how satisfied I was, huh?

Interviewer: When did...when did the job stop being fun, a challenge, interesting - six months, a year, two years?

Student: A couple of years, because I went from being a receptionist for a private physician to a legal secretary trainee, and that was all new and different and a lot of fun. Then I advanced to an office manager, meaning that I was one secretary to three lawyers just starting out, so I had to run the office...

Interviewer: And got all the headaches...

Student: Oh, all the headaches. I never realized, I mean I painted the furniture, did everything. It was fun. It was a growth experience. I did get sick of the work, eventually; that was in '81, so it was about four years before I got really fed up. I did go into the computer field for awhile, training and demonstrating.

Interviewer: You've got a great voice. I can see you doing that.

Student: Thank you. I did well, but you have to constantly push and it got to the point where the company was expecting just too much of me. I didn't have any kind of health plan and they were cutting back on personnel, and expecting too much of us, so after about a year and a half, I went back to secretarial work.

Interviewer: Can I ask where you were living at this time? Did you have your own apartment or...

Student: I was out pretty much on my own. Well, actually I was living with my boyfriend until my injury (points to right hand); that has changed a lot of things in my life. I'm now living at home with my mother. I get along with her well, but you know, she still thinks she has to tie my shoes and zip up my coat before I go out.

Interviewer: Not unusual. Fathers can be the same way. But you went back home. Will you be there this upcoming year?

Student: At least.

Interviewer: Until you get into this program, and perhaps through it?

Student: Right.

Interviewer: Do you think you'll do it...(Interviewer gestures with eyes towards student's hand.)

Student: I believe I can. So far it hasn't been too bad. It hasn't...I've a good physical therapist who's already had me cross country skiing. I'm trying everything I can do. I'm trying everything.

Interviewer: When did the accident happen?

Student: December 2, 1985, so it's only been about six months or so.

Interviewer: Well, you're not wasting much time. I'm...well, I'm impressed!

Student: The first couple of weeks were nice sitting around and relaxing but then if there's no snow to go skiing, then you go stir crazy!

Interviewer: Are you thinking of going into nursing because, or as a result of the accident, or was it always there?

Student: Oh, before the accident. I think it came out more then, but before the accident I was working for a female attorney and we would sit down and talk about medical cases--about medical malpractice cases--and by going over the records I really got involved with the medical aspect--not the negligence or any of the legal aspects--the medical part. I was looking things up in the medical dictionary and I found it to be really fascinating. It really interested me. Going through this injury exposed me to physical therapy. I'm not sure just what my major is going to be, but I know I'm going to end up in one aspect of health care.

Interviewer: The preparation for our nursing program will - in the initial stages - be about the same as physical therapy. The courses are common to physical therapy and some of our other medical programs, so you're not closing any doors to our other health technology programs.

Student: O.K. That's good to know.

Interviewer: So, you made a decision to begin school. When was that? No wait...when did you act on that decision? When did you arrive here, on campus, to apply?

Student: January.

Interviewer: And what were you thinking--what went through your mind?

Student: I was scared, scared to death. My sister and brother-in-law, who have been close to me, kept telling me that this is the perfect opportunity for me to go to school. My brother-in-law kept saying, it's not that difficult just because you don't know the procedure. I didn't have any idea..then, as far as registering, it was confusing. I was frightened. You helped me a lot.

Interviewer: Oh, I was just up there checking on something. Glad to help. Can you be more explicit about what you were afraid of?

Student: Well, it turns out I was wrong: The students are about ten years older than I thought they would be. I thought they would be eighteen or so, but I've seen quite a few older people here. That's made me feel much more comfortable - especially seeing them during the day. I thought maybe the people who had been out of school, you know, working in the field, or a housewife coming back to school...I thought all those people would be here in the evening. I don't know..I just thought that.

Interviewer: Well, they're here in the evenings - by the truckload, but they're also well represented during the day, too.

Student: I was surprised.

Interviewer: When you get into your classes, look around. You'll see the eighteen and nineteen-year-olds, and they'll be just like you were when you were eighteen or nineteen. (Laughter.)

Student: Oh, I admit it. Remember what I said about biology! (Laughter.)

Interviewer: But, you'll see a number of people that are older, some retired people, too. OK, so you were quite leery about the competition--younger, brighter, quicker--more into...more comfortable with books. Anything else?

Student: Yeah. With my study skills. I was also worried about how I was going to do on the placement test. English is not one of my stronger points. I didn't really like English when I was in school. And the math test - there's a part that asks how many years it's been since you've taken a math class? It was eleven years. I panicked, but then I thought OK, I'm not going to expect too much of myself, and you know, I got one wrong out of twelve and it just..it helped me a lot seeing my scores on the placement test. I was pleased with myself.

Interviewer: Wait till you get your grades. You're going to be pleasantly surprised.

Student: I'm going to apply myself. I only wish I would have done this years ago.

Interviewer: You need to be scared. That's healthy.

Student: Well, then, I'm healthy! (Laughter.)

Interviewer: So, your concerns were the competition from other students and the amount of time you've been away from school.

Student: Yes, but also how to get into college. I didn't know what to do at first. I had a lot of questions, and you know I really didn't know what to expect..

Interviewer: There are tricks to the place. You need average intelligence, but you've also got to be personally skillful. You've got to ask yourself, 'does this guy want me to know the X or just the Y?' 'Why is he pushing this?' 'Why is she spending so much time on this?' You've got to read that, too. You only do that by stumbling and falling, but getting up and continuing on. You pursue and persevere. And you don't become sensitive, or continue to be sensitive about mistakes or misjudgements.

Student: O.K.

Interviewer: There are a lot of techniques and tricks to learn. And you will learn them. Now, if I may change subjects; you're here and ready to do this full time. How are you going to afford it?

Student: I was hoping for Financial Aid. I've been out of work almost a year now and I know that financial aid is based on one's prior earnings, but let me say that I'm going to do this regardless. Even if I take a five-dollar-an-hour job, or do something in the evenings. I'll do it, because this is my best opportunity. If the Financial Aid does not come through and I...last year I made fourteen, a little over $14,000. That wasn't too bad. My mother offered to help. She said, 'I lent your sister money for her house. I want to see you go to school.' So she said I could borrow it from her and pay it back.

Interviewer: You're fortunate.

Student: I'm very fortunate.

Interviewer: Personally, how are things in your personal life? By that I mean you referred to your mother...

Student: Oh, sure. I understand how you can't quit being a mother. I also live with my grandmother. She's 87, so she's getting up there. In fact we just brought her back from the hospital. She had pneumonia. She...that was a lot of pressure. There's been so many changes due to the injury; mynot working, I quit smoking which I couldn't do for years - everything has taken on a new meaning. Many changes.

Interviewer: This is significant, not only physically, but mentally - emotionally.

Student: I was doing fine. I couldn't believe how well I was doing physically and emotionally. Then a couple of weeks ago, or actually it was last week, everything stopped happening, it didn't seem like any more changes were occuring, and everything hit me. I got very depressed, but then a couple of friends said, 'come on, we're going out, we're going to do this.' That brought me out of it. I've been looking forward to school since then.

Interviewer: Well, this place is going to keep you hopping. You're going to enjoy it. It's a very attractice campus. We've a good library, a recreation complex and it's a beautiful place to walk around in the summer, spring, and autumn.

Student: It's a lovely campus.

Interviewer: Getting back to the personal side. Can you live at home comfortably, get your studying done? Can you keep your independence. How has your mother been?

Student: She's been very good...I know this is difficult on her, I do...I realize that. She'd like me to call if I'm going to be late. I keep saying, 'Mom, I've been on my own and you didn't know where I was...;so it's difficult for her, too. She's had to adjust.

Interviewer: If I can be just a little bit more personal. You said you were living with this fellow or you had a relationship with this guy and you broke up--mutually, I hope.

Student: Actually, I've never been a strong person. I've always been real wishy-washy. I sat down and looked at it--the relationship--and you know, I just wanted to be myself, to be me. I looked at him and I looked at myself and I made up my mind..I'd never been able to do it...that before. I just took a stand and decided. Five years is a long time to be with somebody and there was no marriage in the future...I eventually wanted children...so I decided our lives were too different--what we wanted out of life. It just wasn't going to work.

Interviewer: Can I ask you something that might come out as corny, but I don't mean it to be corny. Was he that blind? That narrow...

Student: No, I never...I didn't think...

Interviewer: I mean, all right, so he was different than you. He...you at one time found him attractive. Understand what I'm saying? (Interviewer points to his head.) Wasn't he growing?

Student: No, not really. He did, at times, over the five years. I was...it was almost like spurts; like when I moved in, he was a different person for three or four weeks. I couldn't believe...I spent a lot of time with him on weekends and...when I moved in, he was making room for all of my things, and I thought...well, I wanted to think...but after awhile, the growth stopped and then he...he regressed. I understand why. He's the type of person that wants toys...adult toys...cars, boats, and he's doing well for himself. I mean that's fine up to a point, but you get past those things. There were other aspects, too. I talked about college and he would put it down. I thought well, maybe this was because he didn't have much college, but I couldn't make any sense out of that. He told me at one point: 'as much money as you're going to spend going to college when you get out, maybe you'll be making $18,000 instead of $16,000 a year. Yet, you're putting yourself that much more behind.' So that's him all over again. It all has to do with money. It's not what you like to do or what you're capable of doing, but how much you're going to make, or how much you're going to set yourself back. But if I'm going nuts as a secretary, even if I was making twice as much money, it's not worth it!

Interviewer: I understand what you're saying. We need to earn a living and you have to make money, but we need other nourishments.

Student: I got to the point in my life where I had to enjoy what I was doing. He just wanted me to take whatever skills I had and put them someplace else...you know, maybe an airline stewardess! That would be great if I wanted to do that. But I just...it's terrible when I think of what he meant.

Interviewer: I...I would think he would want to be part of the adventure. I mean...

Student: I think that's asking too much of some people.

Interviewer: OK, so you made the decision then to cut that relationship and come back to school--you know I just thought of something; you might meet somebody here!

Student: Actually, an attorney I was working with at my last job asked me out. He's been very understanding. Actually he's teriffic! He holds my hand--my right hand and I keep wanting to switch hands and have him hold my left hand. He tells me not to do that. He says, 'what's the matter with you, your hand is fine.' He's really not bothered by it.

Interviewer: You see, he was probably waiting for you to break up!

Student: (Laughs.) If he was, I never realized it.

Interviewer: I would like to get to your injury - we've talked about it, but I don't know what happened. Can I ask how you did it? I know you said you put your hand through a glass window.

Student: Right. I will tell you the honest truth. Actually, it was a storm door. This guy that I was dating and I got into an argument - he locked me out of the house - and I was angry. I certainly did not intend to do it. He was on the other side of the glass and I tried to hit him. It sounds silly, I just remember the sound of breaking glass. It seemed I was...I remember it looked like a lawn sprinkler, blood everywhere I turned. I cut an artery and I was losing blood quickly. I'm sure he got to me

within ten seconds, but it seemed like such a long time. It really didn't last very long. He was shocked, but he took very good care of me. He brought me in the house right away, put my hand under cold running water and called a neighbor who's an oral surgeon. The neighbor came running over to see if there was anything he could do before getting me to the hospital. He acted very fast and got me to the hospital. He did a good job...uh, got me to the emergency room and this is...I've been using this as a joke, but they didn't even ask for my Blue Cross number (laughter); that's never happened to me in the emergency room before. Then the next morning I met this woman plastic surgeon. Here's what she said to me; she said: 'I understand basically what happened and I'm not prying, but I just want you to know...I just want you to think about what somebody could possibly do to make someone go through so much...to do this to herself.' She said, 'I don't want to know the answer, I just want you to think about it.'

Interviewer: Ayyy...good question!

Student: Good question, is right. She's been very helpful. Helpful mentally and physically.

Interviewer: What's the prognosis?

Student: Uh, where it's cut here (points to wrist) the nerves are apparently a millimeter apart. I cut two of three nerves, which means I've only got feeling...sensation in up here. (points above wrist). I can't touch hot or cold things because I wouldn't know. I might be burning myself.

Interviewer: Oh.

Student: I lost an artery which means I have to watch for frostbite in winter; the circulation is not good. If any of your...you have two arteries in your arm; this one artery will shoot off blood vessels, tiny blood vessels, to the other side, so from here the circulation will be somewhat minimal. Umm...I've got to constantly put cream on my hand because the nerve is what tells the skin to secrete oils. As you can see, the skin is real dry. I can't straighten up the fingers at this point.

Interviewer: Will you be able to?

Student: Uh, huh. Eventually, I'm just now learning about the balancing of the muscles on either side of the hand...

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Student: It's fascinating.

Interviewer: It is. The antagonism between the muscles, to flex and extend.

Student: I'm excited about this. I'm learning a lot.

Interviewer: I took some anatomy in college; that is the only reason I know a little bit...

Student: Oh! and my nails, I don't bite them anymore. (Laughter.)

Interviewer: Yeah, but she feels that you will be 90%, 100%? Your doctor? Has she told you how much use and feeling you will regain? I think you said...

Student: Yes, about 95%.

Interviewer: Wasn't that good news?

Student: It really was. Some of the sensation has come back already. It's oversensitive in fact. The progress that I've made so far...I couldn't even touch my hand when it was bandaged. I didn't even want to take the bandage off. I had a hard time looking at it. I was supposed to clean and re-bandage it often. My doctor said, 'Look, I told you to take the bandaging off and bath it. I'm not going to be around to wash your arm. It's attached to you. You're going to have to do that.' She made me...she really was angry.

Interviewer: It's not pleasant to be chastised. But, we're all babies when it comes to our bodies.

Student: I'm glad she did it. I really am. I...she had a drain in there about a month ago. I didn't expect that one. When she took the bandaging off, she said: 'This is beautiful,' and I thought it's going to be just like it always was, but when I saw my hand... It was so improved. She makes...she can do a lot just by suggestion...just by certain things she says. I can write a bit, but I can't take notes yet. I'll do that with my left hand at least for this quarter. I can sign my name with my right hand that's some- thing I couldn't do a month ago. There are certain things that come up that I can't do. I can't reach and grab the telephone. It just doesn't grab. That's the nerve that controls the muscle. I have to wait until the nerve reaches those muscles. That's difficult for me. Oh, I'm also on a machine that shocks the muscle.

Interviewer: Is that to keep them vibrant, healthy?

Student: To keep them from atrophying.

Interviewer: I'm flabbergasted. I think you're a terrific and courageous young woman. I would take bets on you being successful.

Student: Well, I've been looking forward to this; like I said, I've always been afraid, but now it's time.

Interviewer: Yes, it is. I'll be glad to help if you need it.

Student: Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you for the interview. I'll see you during the quarter.

Student: Yes. Goodbye.

Interviewer: Goodbye and good luck.

1303I

ANNA LOUISE HILL

Returning after 14 years away from formal education, this thirty-five year old woman is preparing for a career. She had attended a large state university for one year, but had to leave because of finances. She next entered a hospital nursing program but shortly thereafter, married and had a child. She currently has a preschool child at home, but is now "paving the way" for eventual application to the college's Respiratory Therapy program, or some other health-related field. She is attending evening classes, but will eventually attend during the day. Her husband seems to doubt her resolve to return to college and prepare for a career.

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Interviewer: Hello Anna. I see by your records-your transcripts-that you attended Central Michigan University a while back.

Student: Yes. It's been quite a while.

Interviewer: May I ask why you left Central Michigan?

Student: Well, mainly money. I worked right out of high school and really never saved up enough money to go there. I didn't know if I wanted to go to college, or if I just wanted a job. As I remember, it was kind of a quick decision to go there, and I don't know, I really think I had difficulties then-I was insecure and confused at that time.

Interviewer: Big place? I mean Central Michigan.

Student: Yeah...big.

Interviewer: Just walked out the door?

Student: Yup...just picked up and left.

Interviewer: To where? Where did you go?

Student: Back home to Madison, Michigan. I went into a nursing program because of my financial situation-you could go into nursing and work off your tuition. That's why I wanted to try another school, because I had...you know, because of finances.

Interviewer: Was it a hospital based program?

Student: Yes, it was. At the same time I met my husband; we ended up getting married and starting our family. While I was in the program there, I went down from 105 pounds to like eighty-three pounds. I lost a lot of weight. I think it was just nerves.

Interviewer: You don't appear to be the nervous type.

Student: I had to study real hard. I think that was why I lost a lot of weight. I also had to work part-time. I had a lot of problems concentrating. I don't know if that is just, you know, the way I'm made up, or what, but I found that even in high school I just, well...I could never concentrate. I would read and re-read the same things. I think that they just weren't that interesting to me. If things were interesting to me, I seemed to catch on.

Interviewer: You've got good high school grades; you must have worked hard.

Student: Yeah. I did.

Interviewer: Parents or brothers and sisters, anybody else in college before you?

Student: No, everybody just high school graduates.

Interviewer: Kind of an unsophisticated country girl moving in on Central Michigan University?

Student: Well, we lived in a suburb. It wasn't actually country, but it was a small suburb. I was kind of sheltered, though.

Interviewer: Around Detroit?

Student: Yeah, Detroit. We were north of Detroit.

Interviewer: Okay...so you went from Central Michigan University to...?

Student: Study nursing.

Interviewer: Where?

Student: Grace Hospital School of Nursing. We took some of our courses through Mercy College in Detroit.

Interviewer: And you stayed there for how long?

Student: One year.

Interviewer: Then, after that year, did you get married?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Did your husband attend school...college that is?

Student: Yes. He is a hard worker. I look up to him because he worked a full-time job and went to college. It was hard.

Interviewer: How long ago was your last experience with formal education-before you came here, that is.

Student: Oh, that would have to be in nursing school-that was in 1969. Then I took a course here in 1983.

Interviewer: So you were away 14 years.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: What did you find when you first came back? Was it scary?

Student: Oh yeah, at first, but then I got into the class and I enjoyed the teacher. I...you know, I really wanted to learn. I think that's why I felt much more comfortable in the classroom. I felt older and more mature than I had felt when I was in nursing school and after high school.

Interviewer: In what way?

Student: Well, you know, you appreciate it more. You want to take your time and do it right. You're not young and you don't want to run around. You really want to study.

Interviewer: I understand what you're saying. Some kids are wasting valuable time, but you did that too when you were a kid, and so did I.

Student: You're right.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to get back here? I know we talked about a fourteen-year span between the hospital education and here, but when you entered here in '83, how long did it take you to finally start here? Was it a spur of the moment decision?

Student: Oh, boy!

Interviewer: Did you agonize over it? Wait, that's a bit dramatic...how long did you think about starting here at the college?

Student: Well, in '79, I was thinking about going back to school and I tried. I went and took the test at the Park Health Technical School. I was accepted there, but then I got pregnant; so I was back in the same position I was in fourteen years ago. I was, at that time, definitely ready to start school again. However, I wanted to be home with my children too, so I just thought that since I stayed home for the first one, the second one should have the same time from me. You know, I wanted to be there for them. Then I waited again until my son got to be two and a half, or three, and I got the urge again. I thought, well, I should start taking a class again, so that when he is in school, I can finally be working permanently.

Interviewer: Or going to school...

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: So maybe you thought about it actively for about three to four years.

Student: Yes, about that long.

Interviewer: Then you took some phys. ed. courses which probably warmed you up. Am I right?

Student: Yeah...right. I started with something fun. Well, my husband plays golf, so I thought I would try a golf course. Then I went into a math course, and then I somehow...at that time got involved in volunteer work and I volunteered myself to death. So I thought this year, I am going to do something just for me.

Interviewer: Good thought.

Student: This past year I was involved in preschool work, and I did things for TV 25, you know, the Public Broadcast station. I also volunteered for all those people who go door to door collecting.

Once they get your name on a volunteer list they keep you on it. That's fine, but I also need to work.

Interviewer: You did well in the math course you took.

Student: Yeah. I had a good teacher.

Interviewer: We have a lot of good teachers here. Was it difficult? Did you have to study a little harder?

Student: No. It was easy. I don't know why, just basic math really.

Interviewer: You had had it a while back in high school, right?

Student: Yeah, but I wasn't sure...I didn't want to jump into algebra right away, because I wasn't sure just how much I could, you know, do.

Interviewer: What was your experience? Did you take the algebra in the evening, or...

Student: Yes. I felt more comfortable in the evening.

Interviewer: With adult students?

Student: Yeah. Well, there were...

Interviewer: Mixed.

Student: Yeah, it was mixed. I was, you know, comfortable. Some people were younger than me. It was okay because I felt like, you know, the older students with the younger students...I think anybody can feel comfortable here.

Interviewer: Do you think you would feel comfortable taking a class during the day?

Student: Yes, if I had the opportunity to take a day class, I would try it. I could do it.

Interviewer: We have day classes seven days a week.

Student: I want to probably try Saturday morning. I was mad I missed the last one. I was going to take a Saturday class in the Winter quarter, but I missed the registration because of Christmas, and I was involved with Christmas. By the time we got back from Michigan, I only had two days to decide if I was going to register or not, besides I didn't have the money at the time.

Interviewer: Speaking of Michigan, did you go up to visit parents?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Do they know you are back in school?

Student: Well, I really haven't told my mom yet, but they know I have been trying on and off to go back. I had my mom send me some people's addresses that had moved because you need references and that. I'm going to be telling my mom soon though, because I may be borrowing some money from her.

Interviewer: How about your husband-has he said or done anything about you going to school?

Student: Well, when I...because I go and stop, and go and stop, I've been...you know, he kind of just shrugs his shoulders.

Interviewer: But is he supportive?

Student: Not yet.

Interviewer: Is he negative, or cynical about it?

Student: No. I think...if I go and take maybe two courses in a row, he'll understand that I need this. I feel I want to be in the medical field. Even if I don't get into Respiratory Therapy, I think I might be able to get a job in a hospital. I feel confident in that area and I enjoy the field.

Interviewer: A number of the courses you've had at Central, and at Mercy Hospital, can be used in most any medical or health program we have here. So, you're going to gain those courses. They'll benefit you. The science courses may be out of date for some of our programs though.

Student: Good. Now I can tell him what I have finished; I wasn't sure.

Interviewer: Now, do you have a teenager?

Student: Yeah, and a four year old. The teenager is a he.

Interviewer Did he say he would help you with the house, you know, washing dishes, or anything like that?

Student: No.

Interviewer: No?

Student: That's why...that's why it'll be, like part-time. I think I can handle that, I hope so.

Interviewer: You said two children?

Student: Two. The oldest is fifteen.

Interviewer: Right. Now, when you come back, do you know which course you'll be taking?

Student: Well, I'm going to start with that math-the algebra. I need that.

Interviewer: That's right. For Respiratory Therapy you do.

Student: I'm going to start with the 095, then the 101-get them both out of the way.

Interviewer: Would you say that there are...that you know of other housewives, or other women, who want to do the same thing you are doing-that is, begin or return to school?

Student: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Why aren't they doing it...coming to college?

Student: Well, you know, it's really nerve wracking to wrestle with that decision and it's frustrating.

Interviewer: What do you mean by nerve wracking and frustrating? Is it scary?

Student: Yeah, it is scary. You have so many responsibilities at home. The time...I talked to my friend, in fact, she is a teacher and she stays home with her children. I asked her-her last child is going to school next year-are you going back into teaching? She said 'no,' because she doesn't want to attend to two jobs. A lot of women just want to work part-time; it depends on what you want. With housework and raising a family, you already put in an eight-hour day. Let's face it, when you have to come home and keep up everything else, it's just too tiring. It's frustrating to have to make those decisions. You get completely exhausted, you know. I keep coming back, because the desire is there, but the work catches up with you.

Interviewer: But, you're determined.

Student: Yeah, oh yes. I'm looking...well, my fifteen year old in three or four years will be ready for college, and he is going away. When you've got one less person in the house, it's a little less work. I'm looking ahead to that. I'll have only one at home, and he'll be in school most of the day. That'll help.

Interviewer: You mentioned your husband's kind of doubting attitude.

Student: Yes, but he wants me to work, so he has to come to grips with, you know, what I have to do to get a job. He thinks that it's easy just to...he thinks that I'd be happy just plain out working at some food store. I'm not; I can't do that. I want something that's going to be a career. That's going...that I want to do the rest of my life; not something that I'll do and then quit in a few months. It's frustrating to keep looking for jobs. You're always looking in those kinds of jobs.

Interviewer: You're right. I've had those jobs.

Student: They're not something that you want to do all your life, until you retire.

Interviewer: Well, do you think that's going to present a problem, though, that is, making him understand that.

Student: I don't think so.

Interviewer: You think he'll be supportive.

Student: Yeah. I think so. If I can put it in the right way to him.

Interviewer: Could we have done anything that would have made your getting back here easier, or just...I mean are we not doing something that could help?

Student: No, I don't think so. I think it's up to the individual to take the first step. Again, it's nerve wracking and frustrating, but once you come to...you know, it's reassuring talking to somebody about it. This gives you support and I enjoy being here. It's where you get your support.

Interviewer: Well, let me end this interview by telling you that I believe you're doing the absolute right thing. I want to thank you for letting me interview you, and please come back as you get closer to applying to your actual program.

Student: Thank you. I was glad to talk with you.

Interviewer: I enjoyed it. Thank you. Good-bye.

Student: Good-bye.

0981I

LINDA JANOWICH

Married at 20 and a high school drop-out who quit in the 12th grade because she was "tired of school," this student has long dreamed of being a school teacher. Her husband has urged her to "get on with her own life," and now that her children are in high school,she has the time to "work on her dream." She is concerned about being "rusty" and not as capable as the younger students. We discuss easing her into her subjects and setting up the right environment for studying. At the mention of her having to take a placement test, she becomes a bit anxious. The anxiety builds, but then it subsides-she is learning how to handle school.

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Interviewer: Hello, Linda, why don't we begin by you telling me why you're attending our college.

Student: I would like to get a college degree and become a teacher.

Interviewer: Good for you. Did you finish high school?

Student: I took the GED.

Interviewer: That's fine. Where do you think you would like to go on to a four-year school?

Student: Baldwin Wallace.

Interviewer: Anywhere else?

Student: Cleveland State. It's closest and I do have a family.

Interviewer: Sure.

Student: I have a family, so I have to remain in town.

Interviewer: You probably haven't narrowed it down all the way, but do you think it would be elementary or secondary education? or doesn't it matter right now.

Student: It doesn't really matter right now.

Interviewer: Okay.

Student: I think once I get into it, 1'll be able to make a decision.
(Interviewer hands the student a sheet of paper.)

Interviewer: This is a transfer guide; have you seen these before?

Student: No.

Interviewer: It's a transfer guide for a Bachelor of Science in Elementary-Secondary education at Baldwin Wallace.

Student: Oh, that's what I need.

Interviewer: This sheet is the transfer guide to Cleveland State in education so we will try to keep this in mind, too.
(Interviewer hands the student a second form and then refers to both forms.)

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: About how long ago did you take the GED?

Student: Well, I almost didn't take it, but about two years ago. I studied for six months for that test. I thought I wouldn't pass, but I did.

Interviewer: Why is it we often doubt our abilities.

Student: Well, when you're out of school for 18 years...

Interviewer: Oh, right...

Student: And you read mostly newspapers and you might pick up a book once in a while, or occasionally go to the library, you...you just lose confidence in yourself.

Interviewer: I bet you do.

Student: You know, you're in a hum-drum routine every day. Family life, maybe a job-and you just-well, you say, or you think: 'this is all I'm ever going to amount to.'

Interviewer: How long have you been threatening to come back, but then think to yourself, 'oh, no, I'm afraid.'

Student: Yeah, that's it. Fear-fear of failure. So, what I did is I really started out accomplishing small things. Even if I finished a book, my husband would say, 'That's great; you finished the book. How long did it take you?' Well, in between cooking and sewing and everything else, maybe a month even. But, that was an accomplishment. If you start out slow, you realize, 'Hey, I can accomplish small things, why can't I accomplish something bigger?' It's been years, though, that I thought of getting back to school.

Interviewer: I'm not surprised; it requires time.

Student: Yeah. Well, you have to make compromises. So, the floor is dusty; or the laundry isn't done on time; you just have to develop priorities. I'm doing that now.

Interviewer: Earlier, when you passed the GED, were you surprised?

Student: Yes! I was on pins and needle before the test.

Interviewer: It wasn't that tough a test.

Student: No, it really wasn't.

Interviewer: See, you make barriers.

Student: That's true. If you go in there with a negative attitude, you just go blank.

Interviewer: I know. It's happened to me.

Student: If you go in there with a positive attitude. You get it done.

Interviewer: Right. There's something else you're going to have to be positive about. We're going to have to give you a placement test in English.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: To see where you belong in our writing classes.

Student: All right.

Interviewer: The test will not eliminate you from anything. It may let you begin in College English, which is where you would like to be.

Student: Um hum.

Interviewer: Or, it may move you back one step and put you in a pre-college level English.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: But even if you completely blow the test, it will only be a matter of eleven weeks. I mean you'll go to class for eleven weeks and then you'll work yourself into the college level English.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: I've got a hunch that you'll place into 101, the College English, but, again, if you don't, it's no big deal. Believe me, it isn't.

Student: Will any of my previous experience help at all, or not? I wasn't sure about it.

Interviewer: What experience have you had?

Student: Typing. I'm on staff at the vocational school right now.

Interviewer: It'll help.

Student: Okay, thanks.

Interviewer: You know, the more you tell me, the more I realize that you are not going to have a difficult time here. At your convenience, it could be today, tomorrow, or sometime in December, stop down in room 101 and tell them you would like to take the English placement test. They will probably, depending on how busy they are, let you take the test right away, or, they may ask you to come back in a day or so.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: Now, this test is really about how you write. We're not interested in if you can diagram a sentence. We have a short answer, objective test that is kind of a perscription on hwo well you can write. You'll do all right on it.

Student: I hope so.

Interviewer: So, some day when you're feeling good, and when you feel like taking a test...

Student: Psych myself up, right?

Interviewer: Right, get in there and take it.

Student: I will.

Interviewer: Now, let me suggest some courses. You're going to attend part time?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Day or evening?

Student: Preferably evening.

Interviewer: Fine. We're going to try to get you in this one course. (Interviewer points to a speech course in the catalog.)

Student: In that class?

Interviewer: Invariably women say, 'I don't want to stand up in front of a class and do that.'

Student: Well, it might be fun.

Interviewer: It is! Students almost always come back and say, 'I had a ball.' So this is one I recommend highly. This next one is an art appreciation course. It's a broad survey of art including some architecture. There's no drawing involved, and I believe you visit several museums. Again, while there is no actual drawing in the course, one really gets involved in art.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: You learn a little bit of architecture and the different periods of art; what to look for in a painting and, generally, how to appreciate art. I believe you'll enjoy it.

Student: Why is that course necessary?

Interviewer: To give you a grounding in the humanities; simply to be a well-rounded person.

Student: Oh.

Interviewer: Also, to help you to explain art to your students. The same holds for music. The music appreciation; although the music course gets into notes and instruments.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: In mathematics we begin with basic math: division, multiplication, fractions, percentages and word problems.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: If you are really rusty, you can select the basic course. If you don't know algebra, but you know the rest, division, multiplication, fractions, you can choose the beginning algebra course.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: This is A plus B equals X, working equations, factoring, and some pretty abstract stuff.

Student: Well, I'll be honest with you, my daughter is in tenth grade taking algebra and I don't understand her homework.

Interviewer: Now, don't let math become a barrier because you'll remember more than you think, and your mind will begin working mathematically again. You'll soon get into it. It'll work.

Student: I hope you're right.

Interviewer: I am. You'll 'muscle through it'. (Here the interviewer goes on to explain the required courses for a teaching degree.) You're going to need two courses in biology, also. These require time. There's a lot of memory required, but they're nothing you can't handle. You'll be required to get into the lab and label parts of the cell and other living things. It's just a matter of time; it's not that difficult. Then there's history-a lot of reading. You'll also have introductory psychology courses. I think you'll have fun in these, and physical education classes.

Student: Here?

Interviewer: Yeah. They can be swimming, tennis, golf, volleyball, exer-dance, or whatever you would like.

Student: That sounds like my daughter's schedule.

Interviewer: Pretty much the same here, and pretty much the same wherever you go. Much more depth, though.

Student: I'm worried about algebra.

Interviewer: Well, it will be tough, but that's a course you take when you know you can devote a lot of time to it. We'll give you help; we'll supply tutors. Now, do you want me to suggest a course?

Student: Suggest.

Interviewer: Psychology.

Student: That's a tough one, isn't it?

Interviewer: No, not the beginning psych.

Student: No? I have a lot of books on that.

Interviewer: You're going to like psychology.

Student: Latin? Isn't it Latin terminology?

Interviewer: Not really, not any more than most other courses.

Student: Let's do it.

Interviewer: Good. You're going to like the psych. You'll wonder where the course is going at first, because you've got to learn the body to begin with. You'll discuss how the brain works, why you get goosebumps and things like that. Once you get past that, and once you get into the meat of the course, you're going to enjoy it.

Student: I'm going to enjoy all of this.

Interviewer: It's going to be like most everything else. There are going to be times when you say, 'I can't wait until this course is over,' but the majority of times your studies will be very rewarding, and in a number of cases you're going to have fun. Now, did you want to take one course or two courses?

Student: I was going to take one to get going. Let me ease into it.

Interviewer: That's fine. Take the psychology. If you have trouble scheduling the psych, that is, if the class is closed, or you can't take the class at a certain time, you can take the speech.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: But I think the psych will be the most rewarding for you. If you have to make some adjustments in scheduling, do so. Have you looked at the schedule booklet? (Interviewer opens up the student's scheduling booklet.)

Student: No. Oh, this?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student: No. I haven't.

Interviewer: Have you ever scheduled for classes?

Student: Not at college.

Interviewer: A class will cost you $22.00 per credit. So, if you take a three-credit class, you're going to need $66.00.

Student: I see.

Interviewer: This is the one we would like you to have. (Interviewer points to a beginning psych class.) Do you know where to register?

Student: No.

Interviewer: In 229. You go out the door and up the stairs, you'll see a sign that says "registration." That's where you begin to register.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: Let's see. What else can you take?

Student: I never thought I would go to college and take gym classes.

Interviewer: Well, you can do the swimming or you can do the exer-dance. You can take most anything you want. Now, ask me anything.

Student: Ask you anything?

Interviewer: Because if you don't, I'd like to ask you something.

Student: I really don't have any questions. I'm just anxious to get started. Well, I do have one question, you don't know the textbook that will be used, do you?

Interviewer: No. Go over to the bookstore and take a look. There will be signs that say "psychology." Look for Psych 101 and that's the one that's going to be used.

Student: I have a book at home that's about 10 years old.

Interviewer: Nope. You've got to buy one.

Student: See, I would like to get a little bit of a head start. I'm the kind of person that has to read something four times before I comprehend it unless I have absolute quiet, and that's almost impossible.

Interviewer: Let me make a suggestion. You might not be able to do it, because you have a family, but I found when I went to the college library and found a little cubby at the library and studied, I got more done there in one hour than I would in three hours at home. So find yourself a cubby somewhere, wherever that is.

Student: That's a good idea. Even if I have to lock myself down in the basement at home.

Interviewer: Try to get out of the house if you can. If not, the basement sounds okay.

Student: Well, that's the only question I have.

Interviewer: Now, let me ask you something. How many children do you have?

Student: Two.

Interviewer: How old are they?

Student: My daughter is fourteen and my son is thirteen. Now that they're old enough to take care of...well, I'm still their mother, but I m not that necessary now. They are involved in after school activities and they're out a lot.

Interviewer: So you don't anticpate any problems with them.

Student: No. Not really.

Interviewer: When you were in high school, did you think about college?

Student: Yes, but I was a rebellious teenager.

Interviewer: Well, there were a lot of us around.

Student: I think I did a lot of things for spite and when you do things for spite, you only hurt yourself. I quit high school in the twelfth grade, got a job, bought a car, still lived at home. At twenty-one, I was married. At twenty-two, I was a mother. And that's the story of my life.

Interviewer: It's a good time to start a 'second' life. You're going to come out of college at the right time. There have been a lot of kids coming into school systems now. You've probably read about it. I don't know all the reasons for it.

Student: I did, in Time magazine.

Interviewer: Right. And they are probably kindergartners, first, and second graders right now. In another four years, they are going to be right in the middle grades. This just may work out well, in the long run, for you. How about finances? Can you handle the tuition?

Student: My husband said he will help me financially, but I really would like to do this on my own. I've been saving up some money and this is something I want to do.

Interviewer: Have you talked to anybody about this? Friends? Sisters?

Student: There is a lady across the street from me who teaches in Strongsville. She's given me confidence and incentive.

Interviewer: Good. You know, I just finished reading something, and I'm having it copied. Let me get it for you. I'll be right back.

Student: Okay. (Interviewer leaves and returns with some papers.)

Interviewer: These are excerpts from a study done on women returning to school. You can read these. You're probably thinking very similar things that other women were when they decided to go back to college.

Student: I felt so nervous just coming here for the GED. I stopped someone and said, 'Can you tell me where the such-and-such is?' He said, 'Oh, sure, go down the hall, make a left and then a right in the A wing. Go up the steps....' It all sounded confusing to begin with.

Interviewer: Yeah. You're going to be surprised though once you get to the campus and start taking classes. You'll see how many people your age, and older, are attending school.

Student: I read that.

Interviewer: Our average age is twenty-eight, and you're going to find that the kids-the 18-20 year olds-are really terrific.

Student: I like kids.

Interviewer: Can I ask how your husband is doing?

Student: My husband is ten years older than me. He-this is a second marriage for both of us-he put himself through college. It took twelve years. He has his master's degree in Business Administration. He has his own business and he's doing very well.

Interviewer: What does he say to you?

Student: About me?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student: He wants me to be happy and his philosophy is that the only way I can be happy, as his wife, is by me being my own person. When I'm happy, he's happy, and it works both ways; it's a good philosophy.

Interviewer: But, he's a big supporter?

Student: Absolutely! He encourages, you know, sometimes I don't care who you are or what your interests, sometimes you just procrastinate opening a book. You say, 'I've got to get this done.' He'll just push me off into another room, put the book in front of me and say, 'Here, read.' Sometimes I need that push. I procrastinate a lot but I'm overcoming that. That's why I'm here.

Interviewer: Let me say, before we conclude, that you've overcome much already and that the hardest part is over. I mean what you've done so far, other than perhaps some geniunely tough courses, but we're talking about a different type of difficulty there. Here we're talking about a very personal type of difficulty. Really, and symbolically that part is over, you're past that already.

Student: Well, it's easier than I imagined....It's easier, too, when you walk in the building and look at other students and think, 'Well, they've all gone through this, so, I'm not...I may feel alone, but I'm not.'

Interviewer: You're right. You have a lot more in common with our students than you realize. And you're going to be pleasantly surprised with our instructors, You're going to find them reasonable and human, yet demanding at the same time.

Student: So they don't wear a little professor hat and gown and carry a ruler? (Laughs.)

Interviewer: No, no, and there's no detentions, and no bells, and no uniforms. And nobody is going to check on you. You're an adult. By the way, if you can't come back in the Spring quarter, you can return in the summer or fall. It's not that you've got to do this in a certain amount of time. We're not rigid and unbending about this. You and the college are in this together. So, get all those pre-conceived notions about education and schooling out of your head. You may have had a bad experience when you were sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen, but that's past now. Now, if you have any concerns, come on in here, or talk to your instructor. We're here to help you succeed.

Student: Well, thank you. I'm really anxious to start. I wish it was beginning tomorrow.

Interviewer: Good luck. I hope I see you on campus.

Student: You will.

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JANET LEACH

It's not every student who can earn straight A's in chemistry. After five chemistry courses, including inorganic, general, and organic chemistry, this thirty-one-year old woman has done exactly that. In addition to chemistry, she has received an A in a political science course. She is, as a result of this effort, a 4.0 student. They don't come any better.

She did poorly in her first attempt at college and attributes that somewhat to a lack of direction, as well as a too active social life in those days. She is currently employed as a chemist for a large battery company and enjoys the chemical world. She is an avid and a good racquetball player and is concerned about maintaining a healthy balance between her studies and her social/athletic life. She surprised me, in that I was expecting her to reply differently to my question about her excellence in chemistry. I was expecting her to say that chemistry came easy to her; instead, her reply to my qestion was, "Chemistry is hard, and I study hard."

We also talked a bit about the problem of selecting a career and the folly, at times, of having to choose one's life work at nineteen or twenty years old. This was our second meeting. I hadn't examined all her grades, or talked at any length with her at our first meeting.

* *

Interviewer: Hello, Janet. Thanks for agreeing to come back and letting me interview you.

Student: That's okay if you want to interview me. I don't know what I can do...

Interviewer: You can help.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: I called you back here because I just took a second look at your records, and you have all A's; explain that to me.

Student: A lot of studying. I was really scared when I started back to school, and one of the things I said was that if I was going to go back to school, I was going to put everything I had into it. In Inorganic Chemistry I didn't have to put that much time in though; I had had Inorganic Chemistry before. With Organic Chemistry, it was different. I almost became obsessed. The first A I got made me want to study even more. It got to the point where I studied at work, in the afternoons, weekends, almost every day of the week.

Interviewer: So chemistry doesn't come easy for you?

Student: No, I have to study and I have to study hard. I took a political science class and that wasn't as difficult. It's required reading, but not as much time as organic chemistry, not nearly as much time. I still put the time into it, though.

Interviewer: So chemistry is as hard for you as it was for me, and most anybody else. It's just that you work hard at it. Do you enjoy it?

Student: Yes. I would say when I first took it a long time ago, I couldn't stand it, and I went into that chemistry class with that attitude. I was scared to death this time, but I put my mind to the fact...I said, 'Okay, I'm really going to buckle down and study in this class.' This time it made more sense. It just seemed to flow a lot easier for me. That's probably because I studied it. After my first day I relaxed and studied a little bit more and did fine. I was no longer afraid of it. I actually enjoyed it.

Interviewer: How about math? Did you have much trouble with math back then?

Student: I haven't taken math since...I had some in college. I got as far as pre-calculus. Math was my best subject; it came easiest to me.

Interviewer: You just mentioned that you had it, math, in college, You've been to another college. Can I ask where?

Student: Miami University...Oxford, Ohio.

Interviewer: How long ago?

Student: I started in 1974 and quit in 1976.

Interviewer: Can I ask why?

Student: Why did I go, or why did I quit?

Interviewer: Why did you quit. Was it money, personal problems, family?

Student: Well, money was a big factor. The biggest factor, though, was the fact that they kicked me out. I got back in on appeal.

Interviewer: Well, that makes two of us.

Student: Oh, no. Well, they let me back in. They felt sorry for me. I had been in the hospital with tonsilitis during finals, so they looked at that and said, 'We'll give you another chance.' And, you know, that was my best quarter. That was one reason; money was another reason; and third, I would say that I just really didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't really know...if I really wanted a degree. I didn't know what I was going to do with it. I was just really confused, so I thought maybe I would take off a quarter, or two quarters. Well, I quit that June of '76, and in August I got a really good job in a chemical company, and I never went back to school.

Interviewer: Did you go to Miami right out of high school?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Why Miami?

Student: Family tradition.

Interviewer: Are your parents college graduates?

Student: Well, my father graduated from Miami. My mother went to Miami for two years. My aunt went to Miami, my grandfather went to Miami, so you can see why I went to Miami.

Interviewer: I've never been down there. My daughter has been talking about going there. Is it as preppy as it is portrayed?

Student: Yes. And much more so than your other State schools.

Interviewer: Were you...what kind of grades?

Student: D's.

Interviewer: A combination of things, as you said, caused the poor grades.

Student: Well, that's not so much why I got D's, I just didn't study. I was out partying every night.

Interviewer: Can you tell me how long it was between when you left Miami and then entered here?

Student: I left Miami in '76 and started here in '84.

Interviewer: And you had a good job, or jobs, throughout that time.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: When you decided to come back, was it a spur of the moment thing? Had you developed it? By that I mean was it a gradual thing?

Student: Oh, I'd been chickening out all the time. I had been thinking about it since 1980. I would think about it, and then thought, "I doubt I'll really do it. Then about 1982 I started to do it gradually, to try to go back to school, so that I wouldn't be so afraid. In '82 I took a computer class at a local high school. No grade--no nothing. I just wanted to learn about computers. I did very well in that class, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. So, that kind of gave me the courage to come here, to see what I could do here. I ended up starting with something I had already taken at Miami, and even at that, I still audited the class.

Interviewer: Oh, boy.

Student: That's how scared I was. (Laughter)

Interviewer: You're not alone. A lot of people are like that. Are you a chemist now?

Student: I'm a lab technician. We work, essentially, with all parts of batteries. I work with the Scan-Electronic microscope. I can look at something a hundred thousand times its original size. I look for defects, problems, or just quality-control type things in parts or materials that go into a battery. I also have the capability, with the Scan-Electronic microscope, to do X-ray flourescents. What that does is it gives you an analysis, a metal composition of whatever it is you are looking at.

Interviewer: I plead ignorance. You are way beyond me. Is what you are learning here helping you on your job? Is there a direct relationship?

Student: There was in inorganic and organic chemistry. That's where it stopped though, from what I've taken here. Some math might help a bit, but that's about it.

Interviewer: Any promotions coming up on your job, or are you even going to stay where you're at?

Student: I'll stay. I could be promoted to a different title, even though I would keep the same job. I should have that next year.

Interviewer: Do you like what you are doing?

Student: Oh, I love it.

Interviewer: Who do you work with, mostly guys?

Student: All guys in my section, but in the department, which is the Analytical Department, maybe eight women and fifteen men.

Interviewer: How are they to work for, the men?

Student: They are alright.

Interviewer: The reason why I ask is--and I may be wrong--but when I think of chemists, I automatically think of men, and kind of bookish, academic types, at that.

Student: Well, I think today you are--wrong, that is. That would have been true a few years ago. There are more and more women working as lab technicians and chemists. In my industry, a couple of companies in the industry have always had their fair share of women.

Interviewer: I'm glad to hear that. Are you going to leave here eventually and go on to Cleveland State or Baldwin Wallace?

Student: Yes, probably Cleveland State.

Interviewer: Where are you going to stop? Bachelor's degree? Ph.D.?

Student: I hope to get a bachelor's degree. Sometimes, though, I wonder about my drive. It's a long haul, part-time nights, and, you know, I have a job and, who knows, I'm not married, and I don't have any children. That might come along. I'd have to break for that. When I decided to go back to school, I said, 'I'm not going to give up everything.'

Interviewer: Social and recreational, and men and dating?

Student: Yes. I won't do that. I won't give that up. In fact these last couple of years I've planned school around racquetball. I'm in a racquetball league at work; we play once a week on Wednesdays. Now I realize there's a point where that's going to have to stop, but for right now my plans are around that. It's something I really enjoy, in fact I enjoy sports in general, and I don't feel I should be penalized in that regard for not finishing my degree in x amount of years.

Interviewer: You pay for that, for working and going to school. It's hard. It's the tough way to do it.

Student: I am paying, but I'm not going to pay everything.

Interviewer: Well, it would have been nice to have done it when you were young.

Student: Yeah. You usually look back and say, 'Gee, I wish I had done it then.'

Interviewer: But if you don't do it, you're dead. You've got to get yourself a credential for most anything you want to do.

Student: That's right. But then what do you do when you're not sure what you want to do, and you go through it, and it turns out that's not what you really want to do. Then you go through the whole time and waste your time.

Interviewer: I don't have the answer for that. I suppose that's the price we sometimes pay for having so much opportunity. There are plenty of people like that. I saw a young fella' the other day. He has a bachelor's degree in biology from John Carroll University. He's very bright. He did great work, and he's here applying for our two-year, RN program. He's got to be blowing the biology grading curves sky high. 'I did not like pure biology,' he said to me, 'If I had known, I would never have gone for it.' He appears to know what he is doing now, but, you know, this is five or six years later. That's not really efficient.

Student: I know a lot of people who have degrees in one field but who are working in a totally different area, which makes me think they've wasted their time. I don't know myself if I decided back then if I would have ended up liking chemistry, or wanting to work in that area.

Interviewer: Can I ask some, questions about family and social life?

Student: Sure.

Interviewer: Were your parents disappointed that you didn't finish up at Miami?

Student: My father died a long time ago. My mother, I found out many years later, was disappointed. Out of four children, I'm the second oldest; I was the first one to go away to college. I'm the only one who went out of state. Miami U. was out of state because I was from Illinois. I'm the first daughter; I really think she wanted me to finish. She had gone for two years, and I think she wanted me to do better-you know, to graduate. She was really disappointed in my grades, because I was an A student in high school. She kept telling me I could do better. She just knew it.

Interviewer: Does she live here? I mean are you close to her now, or is she still in Illinois?

Student: She's still in Illinois. Since I moved from Illinois, which is going on eight years now, we talk about once a month. We're not nearly as close as we used to be.

Interviewer: How about friends, colleagues, people you work with, do they know that you're going to school?

Student: Yes. In fact, I tell them my progress throughout the quarter. I get their reactions: 'Oh, that's good,' 'we knew you could do it.' It's gotten to the point where if I got anything less than an A, they would be just about as disappointed as I would be. I would say--the day of a test, or the day before--'I started thinking how I'm not prepared, and there's no way I'm not going to do well on this test.' The next day after the test I go to work, and everyone asks me how I did. I reply, 'I got an A.' They reply by saying, 'See, you always say that.' They probably get sick of hearing it. I think they think I'm smart.

Interviewer: Oh, there's no doubt about that.

Student: Oh, no, not particularly. You can study a lot, but that doesn't mean you're smart. There are people who don't have to study and still walk into class and get an A.

Interviewer: Well I've got to tell you that that's the impression I got when I first met you. Then later on, I looked at your transcript, and I said, 'Chemistry an A. She's a bright person, she can do the chemistry, but I'll bet she's going to blow the English.' Then I get down to political science, and I see an A again. I said to myself, 'Uh, oh, she's bright, and she's just not one of those persons that does one thing well; she can do a lot of things well.'

Student: You know that political science class, I went into that class thinking, 'I hate politics, and I'm taking this as an elective.' But it seemed to be one of the better ones that they had to chose from.

Interviewer: Yeah. I agree with you.

Student: Well, as I said, I'm just not into politics. I went into that class with that attitude. We had required reading papers, and the instructor quizzed us on them. I wanted to continue that class, because I kept up with current events; you know, Iran and everything. I really enjoyed it. At first it was kind of basic, the constitution and stuff, but then it got into how the presidency works, and the people he has around him; I really found that quite fascinating and interesting.

Interviewer: Speaking of your political science instructor, what do you think of our instructors in general?

Student: I've had three and all three have shown enthusiasm for the subject they were teaching. That makes the student more enthused than if an instructor showed he didn't care that much. I didn't think any of them were easy, but they were helpful. I did a lot of talking with my chemistry instructor. They were all fair, and I enjoyed their attitude. In chemistry you can tell a lot about an instructor, because you have lab, and lab is not a structured class. You have times where you have to communicate with people and that was really enjoyable. It got to the point where we were almost like colleagues in the chemistry lab with the instructor. I happened to come up with a test for organic chemistry that really helped the rest of the class. My instructor really wanted it so he could use it for teaching exercises. Political science was more a structured class with standard tests and required reading, but it was interesting, and the instructor lectured well. As I've said, all three of them were very good.

Interviewer: Okay. Your instructors were willing to give you extra time, but did you find them patronizing. I mean did they treat you like children, or a child?

Student: No, not at all. This last quarter...that's exactly why I dropped my sociology class, because I did not like the instructor's attitude.

I take that back! I've had four instructors here. One in chemistry I forgot about. He was really bad. He shouldn't have been teaching, because he didn't know his subject.

Interviewer: Have you had Mrs. Walters-Chew.

Student: Yes. In Organic Chemistry. We more or less followed her schedule, the one she had written up for the course.

Interviewer: Norb Kernath?

Student: Yes, I've had him. He's what you would think of as a chemist. He's that typical chemist, even the name fits.

Interviewer: I went to school with his wife at Kent State We had two statistics courses together. I know him. He's just an enthusiastic guy.

Student: In his class he addresses the students as Miss Leach or Mr. Smith. It takes some getting used to, but then you get so used to it that it just kind of fits right in.

Interviewer: He's just a nice guy.

Student: He is. Once I had to talk to him about going on vacation, and I had also been sick for a week.

He was so helpful about getting me the notes I had missed. The time off didn't hurt me at all.

Interviewer: I'm glad you are pleased with our instructors. Most of them, that is.

Student: I was generally surprised. I am pleased.

Interviewer: Did you get your money's worth?

Student: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: How about when you go out on a date, do you talk about school?

Student: Yes. It's a big part of my life.

Inteviewer: It is. I previously interviewed a woman who worked for Honeywell; she was quite successful, but she didn't enjoy her work, so she quit her job and came back to school full time. Anyway, she meets this guy, I forget where, but it was a party, or a singles bar or something, and she said she felt awkward telling him that she was a student. Here's a nice guy, easy to talk to. Well, he asks her what she does? She replied that she was a student. His response was: 'Oh, good, what are you studying and where are you going?' It ends up that this guy teaches here at the college. It was a different campus, but they ended up having a lot in common. It kind of was a lesson she learned, not to feel awkward or be embarrassed about going to school.

Student: I'm not at all embarrassed now. I thought at first I would be, because I'm older than a lot of the other students, but it turns out that maybe in chemistry I'm a little bit over average. I've never really been in a class where they are all right out of high school. Even so, even if they had been, I don't think I would have felt awkward. I've seen people in classes in their fifties; if they can do it, why should I be embarrassed? Besides, there isn't anything to be embarrassed about, it's really an accomplishment.

Interviewer: One of the reasons I'm doing this is that this college, as well as other colleges, is fumbling around for answers for the adult student. Most of us went to college and were told...well, no we weren't told, but it was assumed that we were going to teach eighteen to twenty-two year olds, and that's what we learned. We learned educational pyschology as it applies to those people. I don't think we are doing too bad a job, but there's a lot of things that we're not doing yet that we could be doing. The library could be open till twelve and on weekends, for example. More important, however, is that we should have more full-time instructors teaching at night. We're gradually getting there, but...well, enough of that. I can get carried away with this.

Student: You do have Saturday and Sunday classes which help a lot.

Interviewer: Yes, we do, and you're right, they do help. Tell me, the people you work with, are they mostly bachelor degree people, PhD's?

Student: A lot of them have two years of schooling at a four-year college, or two years of college chemistry. For lab technicians that's all that is really required. All the exempted people, however, either have bachelor's or master's degrees.

Interviewer: Are you talking about administration when you say exempted people?

Student: No. I'm talking like my supervisor, who is really a hands-on chemist. In the wet lab area there are chemists who have bachelor's degrees who actually work in the lab. There are no PhD's in my department, mostly bachelor's and master's degrees.

Interviewer: Any kind of encouragement from the company about getting a degree, or doesn't the company care?

Student: They do pay seventy-five percent if you get a C grade, or above. If they didn't do that, I wouldn't likely be here now.

Interviewer: That is regardless of what school you go to. You could be at Baldwin-Wallace, or Case, right?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have any future plans? I mean regarding jobs.

Student: I would like to...well, I really like the Scan-Electron microscope, but not necessarily in the battery industry. I wouldn't mind doing it in something like food technology, you know, viruses, something like that.

Interviewer: A lot of opportunities?

Student: Yes, quite a bit. I'm not pin-pointing it now, but I know my future is in chemistry. I like instrumentation also.

Interviewer: Let me ask you what subjects you *do* have to work at. I know you said they all...which one is really elusive?

Student: Organic chemistry I did...

Interviewer: Get past the chemistry.

Student: English is the pits. I can't write.

Interviewer: Hah! I was right.

Student: Math is excellent. History wasn't so hot, but my interest wasn't really history, and I didn't study as much.

Interviewer: You're looking at a history major. It takes all kinds, doesn't it?

Student: You don't look like a history major.

Interviewer: You don't look like a chemist.

Student: That's true. (Laughter.)

Interviewer: You'll need a year of English Composition.

Student: Why? If I've already had it?

Interviewer: Oh I'm sorry. You had one year at Miami and you passed, right?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: We need the transcript. Can you get us a transcript?

Student: Yes. I'll have it sent from Miami.

Interviewer: I certainly appreciate you coming in, but before I close the interview, I asked you about what you thought you will be doing a bit vaguely. Do you think you will stay in the area? Do you like the area?

Student: Yes, I like it better than Illinois.

Interviewer: Do you?

Student: Yeah, even better than Chicago.

Interviewer: I like Cleveland very much--it's a nice size town. I find it very manageable.

Student: You're right. That's exactly right.

Interviewer: Let's see, you were out the winter quarter; are you thinking about coming back in the spring?

Student: Yes. Definitely coming back in the Spring, and I can't wait. There's a challenge here that keeps me on my toes, keeps my brain going. Just sitting home and watching TV doesn't do it for me.

Interviewer: I know a retired policeman who goes here; he wants to become a teacher. He said to me once, 'John, I love this place. Everytime you turn around people are doing things.' So, I know what you are saying. I feel very fortunate that I have my job here.

Student: I like to learn. Being in school provides an outlet for me, and I'm doing something constructive with my time.

Interviewer: How much longer do you think you'll be here before you transfer to a bachelor's degree program?

Student: Three years. I've been taking one class at a time, but this next quarter I hope to get up to two or three, and see how I do...how I handle that.

Interviewer: You'll do as well with three as you are doing with one. Thank you very much for your time. I enjoyed talking with you.

Student: You're welcome. I enjoyed talking with you.

Interviewer: Good-bye.

Student Bye.

JIM LEE

At thirty-one, this young Chinese-American manages the Industrial Planning division at the General Motors plant nearby. He has a Bachelor of Business Administration from the highly regarded General Motors Institute and an M.B.A. from a local university. Our college plays a recreational and a vocational role for him.

When I first met him and arranged to interview him, I somehow thought he was a single person; he is, but divorced with full custody of two children. I invited him back for this interview after an initial meeting with him when he was investigating our college.

He is interested in taking classes in photography and amateaur flying, and plans on making use of our child care center. We discussed his concern for his children and the role of his parents in helping raise them. We also talked about the opportunities to meet people at the college, although that didn't appear to be a priority of his at this time.

Shortly after this interview, I met him in our gym. He had enrolled in a volleyball class. He said (and it certainly appeared), that he was enjoying our college.

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Interviewer: Hello, Jim, thanks for coming back. I was afraid you might not be able to keep this appointment.

Student: Oh, no, I had planned to get back.

Interviewer: Have a seat. Make your self comfortable.

Student: Thanks.

Interviewer: The last time I saw you you said you were thinking about getting back to school. I know you're not here yet, but could you tell me what that's all about, why you're looking at us?

Student: My motivation now, I mean since I received my graduate degree, is simply for personal development. When I got my undergraduate degree, I laid off school for a little while; I just worked. Then I thought that if I was going to have any type of a professional career path at all, I should go on for a graduate degree. So I spent several years in night school getting an M.B.A. When I received that I thought, 'Okay, I've reached the level where I want to be, now I'm going to put more energy into my job again.' But now, having been divorced, I have found out that those dreams that I had for a career, a family, and so forth, are not really going to be what I had invisioned. I want to get back to school primarily...well, just for self-enrichment. I've gone to school for...twelve years to high school, five years of college, and another three years of graduate school; now I just want to take a class to enjoy it, not because I feel I have to take it.

Interviewer: Yeah, something like Comparative World Religions, something like that.

Student: Yes, even basket weaving...whatever, just so I don't have the stress of a crucial exam creating anxiety on my family and me...that kind of thing.

Interviewer: I think you are in the right place and I think...

Student: Oh, I'm sure now, just to interrupt briefly, when I was out waiting on you to interview me, I noticed there was a flyer on the children's learning center. I had called up several weeks ago asking them about evening hours and was told they had none. That was one of the reasons I didn't register, because of the unfamiliarity of babysitting, because I just moved back into the area, and I wasn't just going to leave my kids with anyone. So now I just happened to find out that they certainly do have evening hours, so I'm a little peeved that I didn't register for this quarter because of that.

Interviewer: Jim, that changes with our budget. Sometimes we do have the evening hours for the children; other times we don't depending on how much money we have in the budget in the beginning of the year. I'm sorry about the misinformation. Do you have their number?

Student: Yes, in fact I'll go visit them in a little bit.

Interviewer: Okay, and if there is anything that I can do, I mean if they are filled, and you'd like to try to get your children in, I'd be glad to help. I think we can make room if that's the case. Yes, use that place over there. Have you seen our child-care facility?

Student: No, I haven't.

Interviewer: They've got everything there; gymnasium, a little guinea pig for the children to feed; it's just a beautiful place.

Student: See that's one of the critical aspects of returning-if I'm going to come to school, it's going to be on my terms. I want this to be as good an experience as it can possibly be. I don't want to be in a situation where I'm so concerned about care for my children that I've lost the interest in what I'm doing...in a course that I'm taking. So this has all got to fall in place for me. It didn't happen this time...this quarter.

Interviewer: Spring quarter should be a good time for you. Just jump in when it's appropriate, when you are ready for a class.

Student: Even now I routinely look through the Continuing Education brochure to see if there are a couple of mini-courses to take one night a week, or whatever. I try to read the bullentin boards, so I can keep in touch with what's happening in this community here.

Interviewer: By the way, our Continuing Education classes don't start for another week or so.

Student: Right, I saw that.

Interviewer: Let me digress a little bit. Are you from the area?

Student: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Cleveland native?

Student: I originally lived downtown and went to schools on the east side. Moved to the west side when I went to college, because I went to a co-op school. Co-opped right out of the Parma Chevy plant, so once having been employed full time, I just moved to the west side.

Interviewer: General Motors Institute, was that it?

Student: Right?

Interviewer: Was that here in Cleveland?

Student: Well no. That's in Flint, Michigan. So I would spend six weeks away and six weeks here.

Interviewer: I've heard that is quite a good school.

Student: Well I guess that depends on your perspective. I have fond memories of it, and academically, it's right up there at the top. Socially...when you go to Michigan State or Ohio State and even Tri-C...you look at all the other diverse things you can do, and are exposed to. Well, you really wonder why you put yourself through that kind of strict, limited routine.

Interviewer: Engineering stuff?

Student: Well, in my case it happened to be Industrial Management, so...but none-the-less, there was that same kind of atmosphere.

Interviewer: Hit the books all the time?

Student: Yes, I think that's the reason us graduates of G.M.I always kidded between ourselves, that when we got out of there, some day we wanted to go to a real school-real in the sense that there are social activities...

Interviewer: And females...

Student: (Laughs.) Yeah, more than one choice of things to do.

Interviewer: Co-eds and dates.

Student: That has never left my mind. When I went to Cleveland State, I enjoyed it, even though it was evening. It was a different kind of atmosphere. You didn't have one type of student. Anyone you ran across might be from a totally different background than you.

Interviewer: That's part of an education: diverse backgrounds, changing ideas...Jim, you're a young, single guy-I've always said that if I were a young, single guy, I sure as hell wouldn't be at the singles bars, I'd be at Cuyahoga Community College in the evening. I think a fella' would do well to be here. It's just a nice place to meet interesting people. I mean in addition to getting an education.

Student: Yeah, I guess that's a fringe benefit. I agree.

Interviewer: Okay, getting back to your background...Oriental-Chinese?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: You went to Cleveland Public Schools, G.M.I. and got yourself a bachelor's degree.

Student: Yeah, Bachelor's of Industrial...I suppose it is a Bachelor's of Industrial Administration.

Interviewer: Did you go directly to Chevy or GM?

Student: The Co-op period was strictly with Chevy at that one location. I graduated from high school in '74, took a week off that summer, and went to work for them the summer that I graduated from high school. I stayed with them throughout that next school period, and got full-time employment as soon as I was graduated from G.M.I. I've been there since. If you are looking for education since then, I toyed around with the idea of graduate work a little, because I had just started a family and wasn't really sure that I was ready to do full-time work and evening school; however, my family was real supportive-meaning my wife and my parents. Naturally, thinking that would be my ticket to the fast track, I thought 'okay, we have to sacrifice something for the future.' That something was family, time, activities and social activities for time spent going to school at night.

Interviewer: So you got an M.B.A. at Cleveland State. Does it help you on the job?

Student: It does to a degree. People who are aware of it, and those of who know of my background in general, know that I've had alot of formal schooling. I think though that that particular degree suffers in general, because there's just a whole lot of people getting it. Sure, it's fine to say you have one, and it's a graduate degree, but so, five other guys have the same thing too.

Interviewer: Yes, at one time it was a ticket, now you're right-there are a lot of them out there. They've pumped them out; they really have.

Student: Yeah, my feelings about it bother me a bit

...maybe its stature should be higher than it is. Maybe schools should not have put out so many M.B.A.'s. Maybe there should be a strict and clear differentiation between those who have one and those who do not.

Interviewer: I don't know. We saturate-not only in business-law, medicine, education, everything, but let me get back to the M.B.A.. You applied and started evenings at Cleveland State....when did you get married?

Student: In 1978. I actually was married the calendar year before I graduated...June of '78, June of '79 I graduated from school.

Interviewer: Started raising a family; stayed, obviously, with Chevy. How long have you been with Chevy?

Student: Well, dating from 1974 to 1979 full time.

Interviewer: Will you stay? Will you retire from Chevy?

Student: I think not...I tend to think that if I do my job right, then the organization-I'll help that organization become a lean-and-mean organization, so to speak, and that we will cut away the layers of management that we have now. It's unfortunate, but we just are top heavy. And I don't mean our plant alone, but General Motors is General Motors. Today, in this transition phase, some people will have to go, and one of them may be me. I don't know. Certainly, I think for the long-term survivalbility of the company, that's where we have to go and what we have to do.

Interviewer: That's scary. Do you work seven and a half-eight hours a day...do you put much ovetime in?

Student: Very little in the position I have now. Prior to this I had almost a blank check on overtime.

Interviewer: What do you do for recreation?

Student: Right now there's very little of that. I attribute that to the fact that I just moved into an apartment a month ago, and am still trying to get acclimated with the neighbors and the neighborhood. I'm still not comfortable with how I'm taking care of my kids yet. I'm their sole support right now, financially and emotionally, because they get little visitation from their mother.

Interviewer: How old are they?

Student: Eight and four. So there's a lot of new life experiences that I am trying to learn, much less do well at. I'm trying to substitute for both the mother and father kind of thing, although I don't believe that's really possible. I'm a father and I can never be their mother, but...

Interviewer: And vice-versa too. I know...excuse me, go on.

Student: Yeah. Right. So what I have done for myself is primarily gotten involved in photography again. I've had that interest since I was in high school; then I let it go a bit because of the financial problems of raising a family-it's kind of an expensive hobby. I've decided to go back into it again, not because it's any less expensive, but just, like you say, for recreation. That too interests me here. I had taken a photography course in 1981 and I've seen the facilities of the department here-they're top-notch. So there again I see Cuyahoga as having a lot of things...I can take anything I want and probably be satisfied with it. It's really up to me, but I'm taking it slow now.

Interviewer: Well, we'd like to have you when the time comes; I think you'll enjoy us. You had photography in mind...didn't you also have aviation in mind?

Student: That too. I want to make this as open-ended as possible, and with as little stress as possible, and as enjoyable as possible. Given that I was already involved in a camera club, I said, 'Well, maybe I'll look at something I've never done before, something out of the ordinary.' That seemed like something that I might have some interest in. There's certainly other fields here I've thought about: hospitality management, real estate, comparitive religions, a lot of areas.

Interviewer: How about your social life? Can I ask you if you date? Or is it too soon?

Student: Well, I haven't yet. I just recently stopped going to weekly counseling sessions, not only for me, but for my relationship with my kids, and how they are being impacted by this change in lifestyle-you know, being with just one parent.

Interviewer: How long has it been since you were divorced?

Student: Mid-September. What really happened was that up until mid-April, I thought I was happily married. So you see from mid-April to mid-September I went from being what I thought was happily married, to a completely divorced person. I understand that often times those sudden changes are more stressful than the ones where you've had long, drawn-out fights, and finally its a relief just to do it. I've really tried to go slow, and as I have pointed out earlier, I'm very concerned about how I'm raising my kids, you know, whether or not I'm doing the right things for them.

Recreationally, I limit myself to going out no more than twice a week, but hopefully no less than once a week, so I'm not consumed by being with them all the time, but on the other hand, being sure I'm around often enough. I just returned from a trip to Canada last week where I was gone overnight and my kids missed two days of school. I try to minimize all that.

Interviewer: Can your family-your Mom and Dad-can they help you with the kids?

Student: Well, they can and they have-to a greater degree than I really want them to. After all, I'm a very traditional person, my background being Chinese and all. I don't think it's an over generalization to say that we are raised to respect our elders. There's a traditional map in our lives that says you do as you're told and when you're on your own, keep in the back of your mind that eventually things turn. Meaning that when your parents become old, it's your responsibility to care for them and that's how the cycle perpetuates itself. So here I am out on my own, and now I have to go back and ask my parents for help in babysitting and what not. I'm not totally comfortable with that.

Interviewer: What happens when you're at work. How do you manage that?

Student: Fortunatley for me there is a combined preschool and elementary school on Broadview Road, so I am able to drop both children off at the same place and pick them both up at the same time. If it wasn't for that, I'd be going through all sorts of problems trying to make sure they are taken care of. That was just a lucky coincidence. They had already been going to that school prior to the divorce, because my wife was working at the time.

Interviewer: That, I imagine, costs. Let me ask about that: How are you doing financially? I mean I'm not trying to be nosey here, I mean in general, how are you doing?

Student: Well, that depends...I always tell my parents that it's not really a matter of in-take, but it's out-go; certainly my income is middle class. When we were married, we made some decisions and maybe lived beyond our means. You should know that included with the divorce, I've filed bankruptcy. So, right now I'm certainly not living as well as I would like to. But from a stress standpoint, I'll never support the kind of mortgage I did before. The apartment I live in now is fine. And I can see now that if I stick to a routine, and use my finances wisely, within a matter of a year, I'll be doing fine, as opposed to the way I lived for the past five years.

Interviewer: Well, I believe you can afford us. We offer Saturday and Sunday classes also, but you may want to spend that time with your children. The child care center is open Saturday mornings till 1:00 p.m., if I'm not mistaken, and they're not expensive.

Student: There's so many choices here that I could fill up seven days a week with something. But I want to be sure that I give my kids enough time, and give myself enough time without creating too much havoc in my schedule.

Interviewer: I've worked here on Saturday mornings...you said you lived at Pleasant Lake Apartments.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: You could walk over with the kids, have breakfast here, drop them off at the center, take a class, and have lunch. You could be with your children here. There's a recreational swim in the pool on Saturdays. You and the kids could swim here.

Student: There's no question in my mind that I'll be back. I spend a lot of time at the library when I can, reading about whatever. I like to research something, even if it is just a personal interest. I don't always want to go to the public library; I like college libraries-I like the quiet and the atmosphere. Even in this lobby area, to be able to get a book from the library and sit in the lobby and read and watch the people go by. To me that's an environment that I want to be involved in. I can't do that when I'm at work. I don't know where else you can, really.

Interviewer: Boy, do I have something for you. Have you ever been to Baldwin Wallace?

Student: No, I've been to Berea, but never been on the campus.

Interviewer: That's a terrific place. They have some beautiful areas-libraries aren't like libraries used to be-they've got comfortable couches, and chairs, a fireplace, and a cafeteria where you can have breakfast or lunch. I know you'll like it. It's just an excellent place, and I encourage you to use it as a resource.

Well, I'm sure your time is valuable, and you probably have many things to do. Is there anything I can do for you? You've been awfully generous to come in there and give me your time.

Student: Gee, I don't know. I guess I was very pleased that someone would be even interested...to even just voice my personal viewpoints on these matters is something I ordinarily don't get a chance to do. See, that's the thing. I think that people don't realize there's so much more that can be offered to them in schools.

Interviewer: I know you've got alot of things that you need to straighten out, especially with your children, but I think you'll find a lot offered here. Take a look at the Continuing Education program. if you don't see something that interests you, we'll see you in the spring.

Student: Fine, that would be great. I'm looking forward to being here.

Interviewer: Thank you, Jim. I enjoyed talking to you.

Student: It was my pleasure.

Interviewer: Good-bye.

Student: Bye.

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DIANE NIEBERDING

At 33, this woman returned to college ten years after her previous classes at our college. She recently quit her job as a word processing administrator for a large computer manufacturer, returned home to live with her parents, and is returning to attend full-time. She is starting out with two courses to get back into the studying and learning routine. She wants to relearn how to "go to school." She was an excellent student in high school and had A's and B's in her prior college work.

She was on her way to a month's vacation in Southern California to relax when I first met her. This interview took place upon her return. We talk about some doubts she is experiencing stemming from her having to drop a class and also how to respond to a social inquiry regarding one's occupation when one is a full-time student.

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Interviewer: I'd like to know why you're back here, where you intend on being two or three years from now, some background about yourself, and how you feel about going to school. So, let me start by asking what brought you back to college and when were you last here?

Student: I was here about three and a half years ago. At which time, I was working full time and taking some secretarial courses. I stopped attending because I had been promoted at my job and there were alot of things going on at that time--the new position, special training classes and what not. I just didn't have at the time, or the ability, to do well.

Interviewer: Where were you working?

Student: Hewlett-Packard.

Interviewer: Office work? Assembly? Can you describe what you were doing?

Student: I was in the administration section in word processing. I was the word processing coordinator, and that entailed basically computer systems and medical equipment.

Interviewer: Was there something about the job that caused you to come back here?

Student: I knew I had to do something different with my life. It was a highly stressful, pressure situation. I think everybody can deal with that to a point, but then I was starting to get very weary and tired mentally and emotionally-to the poing where I could never relax even on weekends.

Interviewer: Were you living with someone?

Student: No. I had my own apartment.

Interviewer: Ok. So you...

Student: I was on my own and things were going reasonably well, but I started getting these feelings like I didn't think I was living up to my actual potential. I had been working in the business field and I can relate to people well, but it just wasn't happening there. The job got to be very monotonous; it could have been really cut in half. Anyway, I felt I could be doing more than just sitting behind a desk. I think I felt that I would enjoy helping people instead of helping a company. Although, it was a good company.

Interviewer: I understand. Did you tell your boss that you were, you know, resigning? That you were going to leave.

Student: Yes, I did. I did give her two weeks notice and I explained to my boss my feelings. She was...I explained to her that it wasn't a case of all of a sudden waking up mad one day and deciding to do this. It was...it took over seven, eight months to put things into perspective, to go through the feelings and cycles of deciding this. By the way, I talked with my parents about helping me. They told me I could come back home for a year or whatever it would take to put myself back on my feet.

Interviewer: You're lucky.

Student: Year. Real lucky.

Interviewer: You must have good parents.

Student: I do.

Interviewer: I mean I would think that all of our parents want to help, but they don't necessarily want us to come back to live.

Student: Yeah. I think in another year or two they will probably be looking for a retirement home, a small-scale home. I Hope I'm not too much of a burden to them.

Interviewer: I'd like to back up a little bit. What happened to the great American dream of going out and getting a job and making a career and living your life after high school? Were you thinking of college after high school or had you had enough...can you re-live that for me a bit?

Student: Sure. Sure. I think it probably had alot to do with my older sister. She was in college at the time and my dad really couldn't afford to send us both to school at the same time. So he said that is I could work a year or two like my older sister did, and save my money, he would help me out the rest of the way. As it turned out, after high school I needed that break from school. I've always been sort of independent, so I went out, got a job, worked my way up in one company, got used to the money, and it wasn't until I was about 28 or 29 that I decided to come back to school.

Interviewer: You had worked for eight or ten years after high school. How or when did you decide that the type of work you were doing wasn't enough, or really what you wanted to do.

Student: I think it came about gradually. I was more or less thinking, well, now that I have my jow down pat, I din't want to come home and sit in front of the couch. I had exercise classes that I enjoyed, but I felt like my brain wasn't doing much. I was going through the jotions of my daily routine, however, I wasn't really thinking in depth. I didn't have to anymore!

Interviewer: Oh, boy! Yeah. Same procedures, same thinking, same routine, it happend.

Student: Right. Then I got to thinking maybe I should take a class and see how that goes. So, I took night classes for a while. A quarter here or there, you know. Sometimes something came up where I couldn't, but when I did, I enjoyed them. Most of the people in night class were, you know, going for the same thing. It was a little more at the older adult level. It was really interesting. I think I learned almost as much from the students as I did from the teachers.

Interviewer: So you had been coming here for evening classes, but what finally rang the bell. What brought you here full-time? I know that may not be easily or exactly identified, but I want to kind of...

Student: I think that after six months into the job at HP I thought well, once I get the initial training out of the way, I'll be able to get back to school. I wanted to keep, you know, taking classes. It seemed though that my daily work load was so much...I had to give so much of myself every minute I was there, that by the time 5:00 came around, well...I tried to put my job in perspectice and just,...you know, work my daily schedule, but day after day of that. All that pressure, it just was affecting me. I felt like I didn't accomplish my own goals. I was putting off college...I was so tired after working all day that I just about went to exercise class. Well, my conclusion was to quit my job and go to college.

Interviewer: Okay. So you notified your parents that this is what you'd like to do, and they said, "come on," and then you notified us that you were going to be here full-time.

Student: Yes. I took a nice break after that, took a vacation in Southern California and started back with two courses, just to see and sort of...get a feeling for, you know, if there was a different area I wanted to get into and to maybe branch off of what I already know.

Interviewer: Business courses?

Student: Right. At this point, I am still undecided. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: Sure it does. It's too soon. It's too early. So, you're feeling us out here, eh? What do you think so far?

Student: So far...well, it's been a long time since I've been in school; I know that. The energy level of the students...you know, the majority being younger than me-they basically ought to get through in two years. I see their vivacious, spontaneous attitudes.

Interviewer: I'm sure, but if it's any consolation, a lot of what you're observing is wasted motion. You'll find that if you give us till next fall...if you're here next fall quarter, you will be quite competitive, probably better than a lot of them. Don't let this quarter overwhelm you. You're naturally anxious and that's okay.

Student: I think, too, with this nice spring weather, it...you know, it's well, I'd like to be out enjoying it.

Interviewer: Yeah. How about second thoughts? Have you woken up in the middle of the night and said, "Oh, geez, did I blow this!"

Student: Oh sure. Yeah. I've done that a few times.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Student: Last week, just for example, I had a big Psych test and I had a test in Medical Terminology, and they were on the same day and were fifteen minutes apart. All of a sudden it hit me. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I spent over three hours each day. I thought, oh God, what am I doing? Which one has priority? By the time I left here Thursday, after those tests, I was a little bit strung out. I sort of went home and put things back in perspective, but the adrenaline was pumping. You know, you can really do things to yourself. I did well on the tests though.

Interviewer: Listen to me, Diane, I want to reemphasize that what you are experiencing is not unusual. There are going to be additional times when those overshelming feelings take place. If you go through with this, and I hope you do, next year at this time you'll be facing five or six exams. You'll say to yourself, wow, I thought two was enough, but you'll be better, you'll build yourself up to it. You'll pick up coping mechanisms, your grain will react and absorb things much quicker; adrenaline will flow when you need it to flow. Don't get discouraged. You are going to kind of build yourself up to it. Believe me, you will. Even when you doubt it; when you have your most serious ardent doubts and say to yourself, "I don't care what Carbone said, I'm not going to be able to do this." You will. It will become like your job, only more interesting and more rewarding. You will have your own mental compartments, and your own speeds. You will know when to accelerate, when to slow down, things like that. And you'll be able to handle and tolerate alot.

Student: Yeah. You know, I debated. I thought well, maybe I should drop the medical terminology class; I was trying so hard. Then I started thinking well, maybe...and I thought, 'no, you don't let one class wipe you out like that.' I talked to a couple of students in my class and I told myself, 'don't get you carried away here.'

Interviewer: That's right. Don't let one course of this one quarter be a bellweather of what's coming. There's no doubt but that it is tough. You need to have guts. You need to get tough with yourself. On the other hand, though, the Psych course has to be rewarding for you. You have to be learning a lot in that class. You are going to have quarters like this; some will be good, some will be lousy. You've got to muddle through the lousy ones.

Student: Yes, I know.

Interviewer: Are you comfortable here? Or is it awkward for you?

Student: No, I feel comfortable here and I've gotten much more comfortable with my studying, too. My younger sister is still at home and my dad works two different shifts, so there are always different people coming in at various times. I found that was hard. Now I feel comfortable going and sitting down after class and spending...you know, if it's just an hour hour and a half, afterwards, going and sort of reviewing or going over what I had learned that day. I'm feeling more comfortable, you know, going and sitting and not being concerned with who's around.

Interviewer: Let me tell you what I did when I was doing my dissertation. I had a family and had a tought time getting anything done. I would spend hours at home and not get that much done. You know, kids, wife, etc. I made it a habit, on weekends to go to the Baldwin Wallace library. If you go in there, go around the back, up the stairs to the second floor, make an immediate right and you'll come to a bunch of chairs and sofas, and a fireplace. It's quiet, attractive, and restful--you should check that out. It's probably about fifteen minutes from here. It's a terrific library with excellent people and great resources. You can kick your shoes off and study. I would encourage you to do that. It's well worth your while. Then across the street at their student center they have a cafeteria like ours; you can get a coke, coffee, whatever.

Student: I will. You know you just hear somebody even when they talk low so they won't disturb you, you hear it. You just can't help it.

Interviewer: You really have got to take some gough measures, force yourself to find a cubby somewhere, and take your apple with you and get ready for the duration. You'll get a lot done. I know that studying is kind of difficult for you right now because you haven't trained yourself to do it and it's frustrating, but it will get easier. You'll know what pages to skip, you'll learn to know what the instructors are after. So don't be too hard on yourself right now. How about friends and family? What do they say? Do you discuss studying and school with them?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: I'm interested. Let me in on some of it.

Student: My father is the type of person that if you feel you're making the right decision,...well, he won't tell you what he things you should do; he'll let you figure it out yourself, but he will guide you. If you want his assistance, he's there. But he...now at this point, he knows I'm striving for something here and he won't interfere. He sayd, 'Do the best you can, and that's all I'm going to ask of you.'

Interviewer: He is not hasseling you.

Student: No.

Interviewer: And your mother?

Student: Now my mother, on the other hand, I'll show her what I'm doing, or wel'll talk about school, and she says, 'Well, I've been thinking about taking a night class.' And then I'll show her, you know, what the test was, the questions and things like that and she goes, 'Well, I'm not really out to take a test to see how I can do, I just want o get some information.' You know, so she understands what I'm doing and is thinking about coming here.

Interviewer: Are you close with her?

Student: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: She can come here and audit a class then she wouldn't have to be concerned about a grade. She could come here and take a swimming or art class then if you two just want to talk and ride together, well...plenty of things for her to do here if she decided to come over. She's probably nervous though.

Student: In a way, yes. I just noticed that, well...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Student: Her mother, my grandmother,, just lives a couple of streets away and she has said that one day when she's at her mother's house, she would like to see the campus. She has said that.

Interviewer: Have you been here Fridays? I don't mean to interrupt, but Fridays are our senior days.

Student: Oh really?

Interviewer: Yeah. A lot of senior citizens come here for lunch, take a class, use the pool, the theater, or attend a lecture. She'd love it. She can visit her mother, come here, and get something done.

Student: I'd love to get her here. I think we'll try it.

Interviewer: So, your dad is quietly supporting what you're doing; he's going along with it and your mother is kind of, umm, rather active in your returning to school. How about other people? Brothers, sisters?

Student: Yes, My sisters, I have an older sister who is...

Interviewer: Curious about what you're doing right?

Student: Yeah. Yeah. We went to...I discussed it with her. She was an art major in college. Naturally, you know, her eye is different than mine as far as certain things. How did you know she was interested?

Interviewer: Well, because what you are doing is interesting.

Student: You know, she asked me how things were going and I told her I was having some problems with the Latin roots of the medical terma. She took Latin in high school. She gave me some study hings. She also told me that it there's someone in the class that I could get to know and maybe meet with them we could quiz each other. Maybe just two or three people, and you know, sit down and just quiz each other.

Interviewer: She's right. You'll get to that stage. It's kind of lonely for you right now, but you'll get to where you sit down talk and bounce things off people. That's how you learn. It's reinforcement as well as information exchange.

Student: I know..I hope so.

Interviewer: So, you sister knows you're back in school and she's very supportive.

Student: Mmm-hmm.

Interviewer: Anybody else? Anybody not supportive?

Student: I don't think so. A couple of my married friends think it's great that I'm back. I think they would almost like to have the same opportunity.

Interviewer: Give them a few years. They may be here.

Student: That would be nice.

Interviewer: Socially, now that you're back in school, are you kind of out of it? Has your social life decreased? Do you find yourself in a smaller world now?

Student: Yes, socially, but not intellectually.

Interviewer: Intellectually. That's great. What a terrific answer. Intellectually your world is expanding.

Student: Yes. Very much so.

Interviewer: Supposing you were playing tennis or maybe attending a play and a guy comes up to you and introduces himself and then asks your name and what you do for a living. What would you say?

Student: Well, I'd probably hesitate a little bit. I probably wouldn't come out and say, 'Well, I'm a student and I love it.' Although I did have a situation that happened to me a few weeks back. I was out with a couple of girlfriends at this nite club. It was very entertaining. I really enjoyed it. You know, a lot of oldies type songs. You could get up and dance, or sing a song, or whatever. I was sitting next to a guy and we just started talking. After a while I looked at my watch and said, "oh, I really have to get home, I have to get up for school in the morning.' And he said, 'Oh, where do you go to school?' I said, 'I go to Tri-C West.' He said, 'Really, I used to go there.' I said, 'You did?' And he said, "Yeah, in fact I teach down at the Metro Campus on occasion.' We talked some more. I told him that I had quit my job and had gone to California for awhile then came back and decided to go to school. He said, 'Is that right?' Then he said, 'That's amazing, I did the same thing, only I went to Europe.' It was like, hey, I'm not so peculiar or alone after all.

Interviewer: You're going to find that there are a lot of people who would like to do what you're doing. And the more you can be up front about it, and be positive and confident in what you're doing the more secure you'll feel about the decision you've made. You will also be helping some people make some changes in their life. You know there are a good many people out there very reluctant to attempt change. It takes courage you know.

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: How are your instructors? You have Mr. Guion now, don't you?

Student: Yes. He's very good, very good.

Interviewer: He's tough, but fair.

Student: You're right. I like his class.

Interviewer: You're here during the day, are there some other people around here that you see that are your age, your socio-economic status?

Student. Yes.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy coming here?

Student: I do. I think it's a beautiful school for a two-year school. It's up-to-date. It's a nice place to come to.

Interviewer: Well, we have our warts and scars, but by most standards we're pretty good.

Interviewer: How about this upcoming summer and next Fall? Are you going to be here?

Student: I'm not sure. I think what I'll do this summer quarrer is to take Psych 102. I can use the same book and I'll still be familiar with the material.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do it. Any English?

Student: Not summer quarter. I think I'll just stick with the one course for summer. Only because I'm an outdoorsy person and I want to enjoy some of the summer.

Interviewer: One course in the summer. That's fine.

Student: I may possibly get a part-job along with the one class.

Interviewer: Well, I think you'd be kind of bored it you don't--if you just have one course in the summer. You could get yourself a part-time job, take the one course and still have a nice summer--still get out.

Student: I worked...I catered at weddings for my first job. I've been a waitress, so probably could get myself a part-time job.

Interviewer: Speaking of being a waitress. I knew a woman about three years ago who attended here. She earned an associate degree here and transferred to Baldwin-Wallace. She must have been about thirty. She got herself a job at Chi-Chi's as a cocktail waitress and made good money, worked weekends. It worked out beautifully for her. It was kind of a social thing, too. She enjoyed being a waitress at Chi-Chi's. Now you may enjoy doing something else, but it's a thought.

Student: I think I'd like that. I just may try it.

Interviewer: Well, Diane, I hope you enjoy your summer. If you do end up at college this summer I know you'll like it here. On nice days, chances are you'll have your classes outside on the green. Good luck with your classes, and don't leave here until you've finished what you started out to accomplish.

Student: I won't and that's a promise. Thank you for your help. Goodbye.

Interviewer: Thank you for the interview. Goodbye.

1277I

MICHAEL PALOZZI

Five years prior to this interview, this student received an F in a course. He simply stopped attending the class midway through it. The F will haunt him in that he is going to apply to a selective program which requires a minimum grade average of a C, or what the college calls a 2.00 GPA.

The discussion moves back and forth from his children--a son who is severly autistic, and a daughther--to his work at the steel mill; to his wife, who is also back in college, and is a Licensed Practical Nurse, and on to his commitment to do something special with his life or "something not many other people can do." The interview ends with him saying, "I may be just an ordinary Viet Nam Vet and a steel worker, but I love to read and to learn."

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Interviewer: Hello. Have a seat.

Student: Hello.

Interviewer: What can I do for you?

Student: I'm here to look at...into the Respiratory Therapy Program.

Interviewer: Ok. Here before?

Student: Well, yes, awhile back, but only for a photography course. I now just signed up for the first algebra course, and the first psychology class.

Interviewer: Right. (Interviewer opens the student's folder.) Uh, oh, you received an F in that class. The photography class.

Student: Yeah, I didn't think at the time...you know, I just stopped going.

Interviewer: That's going to hurt. It'll hurt your grade point average. It's going to...well the F is going to bring down your average grade, and you are required to have a two point, or a C average, to even apply to that program--maybe even higher. When did you want to apply to the RT program?

Student: In about two to three years.

Interviewer: The grade average requirement is likely to be higher...well, never mind. You should repeat the photography course. Can you get an A or B in the course?

Student: Yes. At least a B.

Interviewer: What if we don't accept you into the program. Supposing we don't have enough places to accept you?

Student: To the Therapy Program?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student: I'd then probably try to apply to the Radiology Program. I would like to get into something medically related.

Interviewer: How about Nursing?

Student: I thought about that, but my wife is in it. She's a LPN, has been for some years. She's now going back to school herself to become a RN, a Registered Nurse.

Interviewer: What's the problem...why don't you both be nurses?

Student: I suppose I'm still old-fashioned enough to still think of a nurse as a female. When I was in the service they were called medics, not nurses.

Interviewer: As a male applicant you stand a better chance...well, I don't know that you have a better chance, but they like to have male applicants.

Student: Yes, I can understand that.

Interviewer: You've got time to think about it.

Student: I'm really fascinated by the Respiratory Therapy. It's in the medical field, but something very specific in that field. It's not as broad as the duties of an RN. It's something very specific. I want to become very proficient at it, become very good at my work, and do something I really feel that I'm geniunely...not only helping other people, but also doing something that I can be proud of. You know, I work in a steel mill. Prior to that, I was in Viet Nam. I've never really done anything that anybody else couldn't do with really only a small amount of training. I just want to do something that I can feel some sense of satisfaction with.

Interviewer: My hunch is you'll become a Registered Respiratory Therapist. I...

Student: I really want that. I want to become certified, work for a year, sit for my registry and then go on for my bachelor's degree, as I am working.

Interviewer: Can I ask how long you've been in the steel industry?

Student: Going on twenty years.

Interviewer: Can you stay much longer, or is the hand writing on the wall, so to speak?

Student: We're doing much better. Things are looking good. We actually made money in the last quarter. We'll make more money this quarter-corporate wise. Next year is looking better.

Interviewer: May I ask the company?

Student: LTV Steel, which is right now in Chapter 11, but actually they're on the rebound. We're making the Wall Street Journal quite a bit. But, you know, my decision, truthfully and honestly, is not related so much to that. In fact, if the steel mill were to shut down, it would probably be, for me, a blessing in disguise, because then I could go full time rather than part time to school. I have two children I'm supporting, and if it wasn't for that, I could go full time. I'm trying to go part time and still work. Then, when I enter the program, most likely what I'll do is quit my job, so that I can devote my full-time energy to school.

Interviewer: I can't criticize that. Mich, I'm going to back up here and ask you how old your children are?

Student: I have a daughter that just turned seventeen and a son that is fifteen.

Interviewer: Your wife, is she going to go back to school?

Student: My children are from a previous marriage.

Interviewer: Okay. Present wife.

Student: Yes, my present wife is going back to school.

Interviewer: Do you have to support your children?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: At that time, do you think you'll be able to support the children?

Student: Well, I have an autistic son; he's severely handicapped, so I know I'll be supporting him, financially and otherwise.

Interviewer: You've got it pretty much planned.

Student: I believe so. At that point my daughter will be pretty much on her own, and I've made some provisions for her education. As far as my son goes, between me working part time and my present wife working, we'll be able to still help him out until I'm working full time as a Respiratory Therapist. Then I can do more.

Interviewr: I hope it falls in place for you.

Student: I hope so. I really am very excited about it. I'm optimistic and motivated. My only fear--if you could call it a fear--is I've been out of school for so many years, that I really don't know how well I can do. I'd hate to use the basis of when I went to high school, which was many years ago, because I wasn't very mature. I really didn't settle down with my studies then. Since then, in the course of the last twenty-three years, I've done a lot of reading--I love to read. I read a wide variety of subjects, and I spend a lot of time in libraries. I really enjoy it. I think I can do well, but I believe I'm probably very rusty.

Interviewer: Look, Mich, I'm almost an expert in what you've just told me. I've talked to many men and women like you. It's both here and here. (Interviewer points to head and chest.) It's both emotional and intellectual. Now you're going to be scared. You're going to come in here and take our beginning algebra, and you're going to sit next to these hot-shots. They're going to be nineteen and twenty years old, kind of used to this stuff from high school. You'll need about six to eight weeks to catch up to them. If you have the will and the desire, it's going to happen. I guarantee it. Work at the math; it's going to require discipline. But, if you have the desire and discipline...

Student: Right now I'm working about three hours a day on algebra. I'm taking a high school algebra test just to get some fundamentals down so that I don't go into the course completely blank. I don't know where--this is really what I want to know--I'll be. Are the other students in the class, you know, former algebra students that maybe didn't do very good, or individuals like myself that never had algebra? I don't know?

Interviewer: When are you taking the class?

Student: This next quarter.

Interviewer: Day or evening?

Student: Morning class.

Interviewer: Well, you're going to be in with some recent high school students. Had you thought about taking the class in the evening, or can't you take it then? Well, I shouldn't have said that. What I mean is that they've most likely had algebra before. They'll be fresh. They'll be young kids.

Student: I work rotating shifts and what had happened was that I originally tried to get in on the evening classes, but by the time I enrolled, the only ones available that I could find were the Saturday, three-hour class and the morning class. My preference would of been the evening class, because I tend to think better and do better in the evening than I do in the morning. I thought I would give myself that advantage. I also reasoned that I would probably come in contact with more people like myself, and I would feel like I would fit in a little bit better.

Interviewer: I'll make you an offer--take me up on it if you want to. You would probably feel more comfortable in the evening, although we've got many guys like you during the day. If you want me to get you in an evening class, I think I can. That's the offer, and you can call me.

Student: Oh, if you could, that would be great. I would definitely prefer that.

Interviewer: When are you taking the psychology class?

Student: I'm taking the tele-course class.

Interviewer: Good. You're going to learn a lot of important information in there. It's going to be a good class. Let me know how that works out.

Student: We have a VCR. With my swing-shift, I sometimes end up working seven days a week and sometimes various shifts each week. This way that will definitely be no problem. I can tape a session.

Interviewer: I'll give you my phone number. Call me if you want a change in the math class. Now back to our story here. I figure you'll get to the application point for the RT program in about a year's time.

Student: Right. At that point I'll quit.

Interviewer: What are you giving up?

Student: In terms of what?

Interviewer: Benefits...money...security.

Student: In terms of money, I'd be giving up to the tune of $41,000 a year. The best I could do as a Respiratory Technician, as I understand it, is about $23,0000-$24,0000 a year--registered, maybe $28,000 a year. So, you see, there's that much difference in salary. But that has little bearing. I think...I think I've turned the corner in my life; it's no longer money. I've made good money all my life, and I've had all the toys and trinkets that most people have. You know, the boats, the cars, and all that. But, you know, inside I feel totally...I wouldn't get so dramatic as to say empty; I certainly don't feel empty, but I do feel that I'm not reaching the potential that I'm capable of reaching. I haven't been challenged.

Interviewer: Mich, you're looking at a guy who did what you're doing, only at a lot younger age. I was out of school for two years and was driving a truck when I thought to myself, 'This is bullshit. This is going no where.' Fortunately, it only took me two years to realize that I needed a career and an education. But I know guys that knew all along, from age ten, that they were going to do it the right way. What are you about thirty-two, thirty-three?

Student: I just turned forty.

Interviewer: I think you'll probably find that in your field, the RT area, that your age won't be that much of a factor against you. Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying there isn't age descrimination. We have a lot of recycled people coming back for second careers and doing it a different way. Tell me what your wife says about all this, about changing careers.

Student: My wife is very supportive of all this. She knows how I feel about this. I have problems getting motivated to do what I'm doing now--my job, that is. It's a responsible position; it's a supervisory position, but it's not at all challenging. I don't see the end product of what I do. We make a good grade of steel, but, you know, I never see it because I'm on the primary end of it. Well, I'm not really into industrial work as much as I thought I was years ago. Back then it was blurred, though, by the fact that I was making a good living. It did much for me, which I appreciate. I have no regrets in that sense. Steel working has made me do many things that I would have otherwise been unable to do. I just...more than anything else, I just want to do things for people. I feel this field can help me do that.

Interviewer: I think you'll find the RT program a stimulating envirnoment. People in the medical field are generally interesting and intelligent people.

I'd like to go back a bit to when I asked you, when you first came in, if you were scared. Your reply was, 'No!' Then later on you said, 'Yes.'

Student: Right. I suppose my first response was a typical response; like someone asking you, 'How you are doing today?' Your typical answer is, 'Fine, how are you doing?' But the correct response should probably be: 'I'm hopeful and optimistic, but I have some reservations about how I feel.' Now that would most likely be the correct answer.

Interviewer: Be optimistic. If you do this right and cover all the angles, you're going to be successful; you're going to like the psychology, and you're going to learn a lot. The math may be a little difficult, but you'll get it.

Student: What I lack in one area, I'll just have to work harder at.

Interviewer: That's right. In some courses you'll do well. Some you'll even slide right through, but in some instances you're going to hit a brick wall. You have to be ready to pound away...pound it down. All programs have those courses. It doesn't matter whether you want to become a teacher or an accountant; whatever your major, there will be something in the program that will drive you crazy. You'll do it, if you do it properly. We have tutoring here--free tutoring whenever you want. Even the students coming out of high school need our tutors.

Student: How do you go about getting a tutor?

Interviewer: Simply walk right in to the room and you tell them your name and what you're enrolled in. Show them your student I.D. Just tell them you need some tutoring. They'll ask you when you can come in and they'll work out an agreeable schedule or program with you. They'll help you--they're good people. There's a lot behind you here. Not only are you working on this, were working on this with you. I'm telling you, Mike, one the reasons why I'm doing this is that I believe that there are hundreds of people out there that would like to do exactly what you're doing. We'd like to have them back and give them another shot at it. I think you will enjoy the evening classes. You will be rubbing shoulders with people just like you, but I think you ought to take a shot at the day classes, too. They're very stimulating. The students are fun, and it's nice to be here during the day. Give yourself time. At first, you're going to feel a bit self-conscious. You'll probably say, at least once, 'I'm crazy for doing this.' But you'll be successful. In six weeks you'll be up with the young hot-shots. They're going to get a quick jump on you, but the race doesn't always go to the swift. What happens at the end is what you care about. Now, do you have any questions?

Student: I was just wondering if you have any information regarding Veterans' benefits. Mine have probably long since expired, but I would like to still check into it.

Interviewer: Somebody in the Admissions office will be able to help you.

Student: Okay.

Interviewer: What did you do when you got out of high school? You said you were kind of an average student.

Student: In high school my studies were erratic. I tended to apply myself only to subjects I was really interested in. I graduated on time and never had a failure, but I never was a real good student. I was more involved with the, you know, the social thing. I was probably somewhat immature. After high school, I spent three years in the Army. This was in 1964; my last year was in Viet Nam, 1966-67. I was discharged and came out of the service. At that point it...it was a rough time for me. I worked at several different jobs, then got the job at the steel mill, where my present job is now. I was in the job for about four months, this was at the end of 1967, and applied to Cleveland State, only to find out that I did not have the courses--the prerequisites. I wasn't determined. Rather than do what I had to do to get the prerequisite courses for college, I just basically gave up on the idea. I thought, 'The hell with it. I got a good job, and I'm settled and secure.' So I went on doing the normal things: the car, the girlfriend, get married, settle down, the whole bit. I look back at that period as opportunity walking by me, or I walked by it. A few years later I took a course, in accounting. I breezed through with flying colors. Even then I looked back and thought to myself, 'Boy, I should have gone and given it a shot.' My VA benefits were available, and I could have gone through college for practically nothing. It really was an opportunity to do something with my life. I do, in that sense, have regrets...but then again I've done all right for myself.

Interviewer: Do you have family...parents, brothers, and sisters? Were you born here?

Student: Yes, I was born and raised here in Cleveland. Garfield Heights. Both my parents are dead; I have sisters out of state.

Interviewer: Anybody at work coming back to school?

Student: There's a couple people that have talked about going back to school, like myself.

Interviewer: I hope they do. It would be nice to have school in common with them. I've never been in a steel mill; is it as messy and rough as everyone imagines it to be? As it's portrayed?

Student: It's very dusty and extremely hazardous work. If the average individual could see what I, and a lot of other people, do everyday, they would really be amazed. You pour molten iron, which looks almost identical to lava, and you do this day in and day out. It's highly explosive. The envirnoment is not good. There are a lot of irrantants in the air. It's a very dirty and gruelling occupation. It's very boring. I think more than anything else, the monotony gets to you.

Interviewer: That's what auto workers tell me, too; the assembly line is monotonous.

Student: Yes, it's terrible.

Interviewer: Well, it's time to do something different. When the time comes for you to apply, please feel free to come back. I can't get you into the program, but I'll bring you up to date with information. I really appreciate this interview and thank you for your time.

Student: Thank you. I really enjoyed talking with you. You know, I may be just an ordinary Viet Nam Vet, and steel worker, but I read a lot, and I love to learn.

Interviewer: You're going to get your chance.

Student: I hope so.

Interviewer: Good bye and good luck, Mich.

Student: Good bye.

Interviewer: Oh, wait a second, Mich. The math class, you did want to change it, right?

Student: Yeah, if I could.

Interviewer: I'll call you at home and tell you which one you can take. It'll be either tonight or by tomorrow night.

Student: That's fine.

Interviewer: Bye, Mich.

Student: So long.

0006I

VIRGINIA RAMSEY

A music major and a former entertainer this student had just received word that she had been selected for a tuition-free music scholarship. At thirty-one years old she is married to a musician, and had been performing in nightclubs with various music groups for over ten years. She had been in school full time for about two weeks. Her reason for seeing a counselor was to clarify her scholarship situation and have a form completed. It is a rather short interview, but one that is reflective of some moods and emotions occurring to some students as they make a change from various other life styles to an educational one..

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Interviewer: Hello. Man, are you loaded down there-books, bags. Don't tell me-you're an engineering major.

Student: Heaven's no.

Interviewer: Ok, I only take one guess.

Student: I want to get a degree and become a music teacher.

Interviewer: Geez, talk about not being close!

Interviewer: Ok. We can help you become a music teacher. Did you want a bachelor's degree? Did you want to teach in a school?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Good. Can I ask why you aren't one already.

Student: Well, because I knew it all. (Smiles.) Really that's only partially true. It was school; I was so turned off by it all, and I was not a good student.

Interviewer: What do you think of our school so far?

Student: I love it. I had no idea how accessible this place is.

Interviewer: It really is. Now, fire away, what can I do for you?

Student: I've just been offered a music scholarship by the music department. I can't believe it.

Interviewer: I'm impressed, and I'm glad for you. We call them "Special Talent Grants." They're awarded to students with academic, athletic, or artistic talent. They're not easy to come by.

Student: I'm worried though. I'm receiving financial aid, and I want to know if I accept the scholarship in music, will I lose the other financial aid?

Interviewer: I'll find out for you with a phone call.

(Interviewer calls the Financial Aid office.)

Interviewer: You can receive both. You will receive your need-based financial aid as well as the talent scholarship.

Student: Oh, that's just terrific; I'm so happy with myself. I just can't believe how all this is happening...how about piano lessons? I take individual piano lessons since it is my minor. Will that fee be included?

Interviewer: If it's an educational activity, and required by the department, your financial aid can be used to pay for it.

Student: I'm going to cry. Gosh, I've been a 'starving artist' for so long, I can't believe...I'll be able to relax and just concentrate on my studies. I want to keep my grades...get an "A" wherever I can.

Interviewer: That's OK, but don't put all that pressure on yourself. Don't over compensate; work hard, but don't get tense about being excellent. You need to have fun doing this also.

Student: Well, if I can get an "A", that's what I want. If it means showing up at so many recitals, or going to a few concerts that I normally wouldn't go to and critiquing them for extra credit, I'll do it. I'm not saying that I really can do it, because I can see where it's going to be difficult. I have six classes for just fifteen credits, which is a heavy load, but that's how all music classes run; they have a lot of one and two credit classes. We have to put in so much performance time just for one or two credits, but I understand why it has to be that way.

Interviewer: That same extra time thing happens in science courses; there is a lot of required laboratory time in order to have to perform what you learn in the lecture class. You have to put in the time.

Student: I know in the end it'll all be worth it. I realize there are a lot of music areas I could go into. A friend of mine works in a recording studio; he has a degree in music, but I'm mainly interested in teaching music in school. I'd like to teach kids; but I'm also interested in music therapy. Music can be very healing, both emotionally and physically. I'm taking a commercial music course from Dr. Howard. The course is about the business end as well as the performing aspect of the music field. In one of the classes, we talked about the field of music therapy. I'd like to learn more about that field...I'm getting ahead of myself though.

Interviewer: You'll...

Student: You know, I've learned more about the field of music, I mean the entire area of music, in my three weeks at the college than I did in five years of piano lessons and ten years as a nightclub singer. All of a sudden I have a future. I'm on a road to somewhere. I've wasted so much time.

Interviewer: Don't look at it that way.

Student: The performing on the road was so tough, not a very nice life style. It's so 'chancy'. I'm glad it's behind me, but you're right, I've learned alot, but I got tired and that's why I'm here. I want a different life style and I have a need to accomplish something.

Interviewer: Did you know that Dr. Howard did just what you are now doing. He toured with several big bands as a young guy and then began college after his performing days.

Student: He's a wonderful teacher. He knows so much. Do you think that's why he helped me get the scholarship?

Interviewer: I doubt it. It's just simply a matter of rewarding and encouraging talent. You earned the scholarship.

Student: I'm sorry, but I still can't believe it. I'm thirty-one years old and I'm getting a scholarship to attend college. Seventeen and eighteen-year-olds have that happen to them. I feel like I'm in a second life, or something. It's unbelieveable.

Interviewer: Education has changed. It's now life-long. You're not the only thirty-one year old student here you know. Take a look around...

Student: I know-I think it's just great. I'm beginning to understand how good I have it living today. I mean I think of my parents, especially my mother. She never had a high school education. She just raised three kids, the hard way, with no money. My father drove a truck for a bread company. We never had much money.

Interviewer: As I said, change...

Student: You know, I mentioned my commercial music course. Women are moving into all different areas of music...arranging, promotions, agents, managing. There's so much...so many ways to earn a living and stay close to music. It's very revealing, I'm learning a whole lot and thoroughly enjoying it...Oh, I almost forgot, I was supposed to give this to you.

(Student hands the interviewer a form.)

Interviewer: It's your degree planner. You'll be in the Associate of Arts Program. I'll fill it out. Before I forget, be sure to stop in the Financial Aid Office and find out all the details about the Special Talent Awards for music. I would do it after you leave here.

Student: I will.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you need to know now, right now.

Student: There was something, but I've forgotten what it was. It doesn't matter. I know more than I expected to already. Thank you so much.

Interviewer: You're welcome. Make use of the college. It has a lot to offer.

Student: I am going to. I've already begun.

Interviewer: Goodbye. Stop back if you need anything else.

Student: Thank you. Goodbye.

MARGERY RATAJCZAK

Returning to college after failinq out of a university at nineteen. Now thirty-eight years old, married, and with one child, she talks about her first days as a young coed and her immaturity at that time. Her return was to prove to herself that she could succeed at college and she has since done so. She is in her third course at the college, and has earned three A s. The discussion begins with her private school background, her thoughts on a career for herself, and finally her family's feelings and expressions of encouragement towards her.

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Interviewer: I see that you're doing quite well in your grades. Can you tell me why you're here at our college, how long you've been here, and how come you're doing so well?

Student: (Laughs.) Isn't it great. I didn't always do so well. I've been back not quite a year. My first course was in the Spring of '85 when I took an accounting course and the reason I took it was basically, it was, to me, more like bookkeeping. I thought I'd take something that would be very practical. I really wasn't too sure how well I would do, and I wanted to take something that would help me at home--just normally help me in life. So I started back; in fact, my husband pushed me back. I was deathly afraid to go back and it was kind of a "push start." I hadn't given too much thought to what I wanted to do, or what I wanted to go in for, so he pushed me in. When I did start back, I was studying overly so. I really put so much more time into it--staying up till 2:00 in the morning or getting up at 5:00 in the morning to do extra studying because it was so important for my self-esteem to do well, after having flunked out once before. I flunked out of school previously, you know.

Interviewer.. Did you?

Student: Yes, personally, it has always been a mental block for me. I felt very badly. Over the years it has just been a constant inside...kind of tearing....and it was very important that when I did go back to College to do well. It has been such good motivation to get back and say, 'I can do it, I can do it, I know I can do it,' and do well. I did have a scholarship originally, but fooled around, played cards, went to movies, did everything, and did not take the time I should have with my school work. It was immaturity, I'm sure. I think a lot had to do with going from an all girl's school into a coed school at Cleveland State.

Interviewer: An urban school, too. They're quite impersonal.

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: So it wasn't what you were used to.

Student: No, it was overwhelming. Flunking out was just very rough and since starting back here, it has been just the reverse. I think to myself, I've got to do well; I've got to study hard, but now I'm taking it slow and I'm looking at it a little more realistically at this point in my life. I'll be thirty-eight in April. I have a daughter. So now I have a different life-style. I'm a wife and a mother and I'm at home versus before where I was eighteen-nineteen and single. I'm now looking a little bit more ahead and I'm certainly much wiser. I worked ten years at Ohio Bell, so I'm looking now at what is really going to help me when I do go back into the workforce. I've a whole different attitude about school now.

Interviewer: I want you to know, if it's worth anything to you, that you're not the only person that feels that way; a lot of people are worried and afraid that they won't do well when first returning to school. That happens to a lot of people.

Student: Well, I remember some of the fears the first day that I took a course here, I looked around...I was looking at the young people just starting college. The kids were eighteen to twenty, and I'm thinking, 'look at me...,' I hate to say my competition, but they were. You know I'm in class and I'm thinking, they're used to studying; their study habits are different. The answers would seem to come so much easier for them. I was deathly afraid of going back into the classroom with people that were used to that kind of atmosphere. It was, in fact, the fear of how I was going to do, or how I was going to look, or just how to explain just what I wanted to do. There is an awful fear and terrible anxiety.

Interviewer: I believe that there are a lot of people out there that would like to do what you are doing here.

Student: The one thing that I told myself, is, when I went to college originally, I did not see a counselor. I didn't know what to do or how to approach school. I promised myself that if I started back to make sure to look into whatever possibility is available for me. To discuss my schedule with a counselor, or someone, because I didn't want to make the same mistakes. I want to have somebody guide me a little bit more, when I really do need it, and take advantage of what's offered at the school. I regret not doing that previously.

Interviewer: Well, you're obviously doing it right this time. When you came to registration was there much red tape? Were there long lines?

Student: The lines...well, I did register at the Eastern campus originally. When I registered here, I found--the Western Campus--this is the first time I'm at this campus--I'm finding that it reminds me of my first time at Cleveland State. There are a lot more students here, a lot more...I said to myself, I want to make sure that I do this right...that I don't get caught up in the same kind of grind like I did at Cleveland State. It is, since you ask, overwhelming. The lines are overwhelming. The names and numbers are overwhelming. The where to go, where to find things again is difficult--especially if you have a few classes. There's so many different areas within the building. I've never been at this campus before. Like to add, for example, a gym class. I'm taking a physical education course so, for example, where are the locker rooms? How do you know...how do you know if the class is going? I can imagine how my daughter in kindergarten feels. It's that anxiety of your first day of school. Like where am I going to find anything! Am I going to be able to get from one class to the other. Am I going to find where I parked my car? How are the other kids doing it?* What are they going to think of me? Am I going to...it's that learning process all over again.

Interviewer: Do you find yourself always asking for directions?

(*Author's emphasis: Students are "kids" no matter what their age. It appears to be a generally used term of endearment.)

Student:	Yes, then when I ask, they say, left and right and left and right, and then I get more confused. You get so hyper! There's so many questions that come to your mind.
Interviewer:	You went to an all girls' parochial school. Did it serve you well?
Student:	I received an excellent academic education, but a not so hot social or personal education. I first became aware of that after flunking out of Cleveland State. Going from an all girls' school which was very structured and then to a college that you have so many free...so much free time.
Interviewer:	And freedom.
Student:	Freedom yes. It was, in fact, as I've said, very overwhelming. I felt like I was going in circles and I did not know how to handle that. I didn't know how or what to do to get myself in line. I was just going in circles until it was too late. It took a good year just to get myself even, and on track, psychologically. To think better about myself because it's an awful feeling inside to think and to say, when people ask about school, 'Gee, I flunked out of school.' It was very sad.
Interviewer:	That's all going to change.
Student:	I hope so.
Interviewer:	When registration was through, when you got your classes and went to the classes, how were the students and what were the instructors like? Can you tell me? Can you remember your feelings?
Student:	Well, most people are helpful. At least in the classroom, except, maybe, for my one accounting class! (Laughs.) I think everybody overall has the same basic feelings. Like when they first sit down they're looking around...,but I have found myself...maybe it's that I'm getting older and a little wiser and not as afraid to ask questions; before, if I had to ask a question, it was like uhhh!! and the first day you re always a little bit more uptight and a little bit unsure, but, for me personally, I'm finding that I've gotten much better. If I'm not sure, most of the time I'll ask. It seems like I'm asking a lot of questions, but better to ask them then to not know or not learn.
Interviewer:	When you ask, do the instructors answer? Do

they make you feel foolish?

Student: Oh, no. They always answer. They don't make me feel foolish. At least I haven't gotten that feeling.

Interviewer: We really have good instructors, and we're all learning more and more about adult students.

Student: There's still a fear of my age a little bit. For example, in my physical education class I'm really the oldest in there. I'm kind of more relaxed about my age to myself, and I'm sure that they are about me, but then I look around and everybody else is...I would say eighteen to twenty-one. Being thirty-eight, I really, in that class, feel a bit more out of it. Whereas, in accounting I'm not so much worried about the physical nature as much as the ability to handle things intellectually.

Interviewer: Do you see other people your age in the classroom?

Student: In the accounting class, yes, but not particularly in gym class. There aren't any older students in there; maybe it's just the luck of the draw there.

Interviewer: You'll see them, there are really a lot of adults here.

Student: I know. I have seen people my age and older, and I really do feel comfortable. I noticed in the cafeteria, where I have stopped for coffee, the age range and the variety of people that are here. That's the one thing--when I started back--I noticed right away. I said to myself, I'm not the only one in my age bracket going to school. I felt at least there are a few people older than me, but it turns out that there are quite a few.

Interviewer: Do you have another few minutes or do you have to go?

Student: I have another five or ten minutes.

Interviewer: Good. How about your husband? How has he reacted?

Student: I think he's proud of me. He's the one that pushed me back into it. My husband has a Masters degree. He has never kind of made me feel, 'I have a Masters, you don't have a degree', at all, but he has seen in me the need, which I have expressed, to go back and try again, and so he has really encouraged me to go back. He is...well...I think in my home...when I first started back to school being a housewife and a mother, and a student, I said to my husband and my daughter, 'I'm going back, I may need some more help at home. You guys are going to have to give me a little more help. You're going to have to make a little more effort so I can study, or so I can have time away from home.' That was good for a week or two, but, to be honest, after that it seemed a little bit harder, although they will back me up and that. But still, the thing that I find hardest is being a housewife and mother and having all those other responsibilities at home; just like I'm sure that people with regular jobs have that kind of responsibility. It doesn't go away. It s taking on an extra load. But, for the self-satisfaction--it's well worth it. I do get the support of my daughter who is in the second grade. She'll sit down to do her homework and I sit down and do my homework and there's that, 'Go to it Mom,' or 'good for you,' and that type of thing. And especially when I got my grades, they were very proud. So they really are a big support.

Interviewer: One lady said to me, 'I do my best. I used to try to have a perfect house all the time. Now, I set my priorities and do the things that I want to do--and that's finishing school.'

Student: Yes. Oh, yes, it is true. I've changed my priorities. At home, when I said I needed some help, they were good for a while, but that kind of changes after awhile. I've found that I have to eliminate a lot of things that I was much more particular about at home, but again, like you said, the priorities change. They aren't the same. Most of them aren't very important anymore. There are some things like placing some more responsibility on my daughter, like saying, 'you're going to fix your own clothes, and you're going to do your own dishes', but these are, as far as I'm concerned, a great help to her too.

Interviewer: How about your friends, parents, brothers, sisters? Any comments?

Student: No real comments, but reassuring smiles, and if this makes sense, a quiet encouragement as if to say, 'I'm glad you're going back to give it a try...that you didn't give up and say, you made a mistake and it's just too bad. At least you're giving it your best. Whether things turn out good or bad, at least you made the choice to try it again and to do your best no matter what.' So, they've been very pleased that I am doing as well as I am. Also, I have a younger brother who's in college, so we kind of confer and see how each of us is doing. It's kind of neat.

Interviewer: I appreciate your time. And I'm glad you're getting your wish of getting back to school.

Student: Oh, thank you. It was nice to talk to someone about this.

Interviewer: Continued success and come back if you need to.

Student: Thank you, good-bye.

0762I

HERB RUSSELL

At thirty-five years old this postal worker is on his way to a law degree. He has just been promoted to a supervisory position as a result of his course work at our college. He plans on transferring to a four-year college, earn a bachelor's degree in business and apply to law school. A former steel worker, he has come up through the labor ranks of both private and public corporations. He is developing a multifaceted labor-management background which he feels will help him pursue his labor-law interest.

He is a Vietnam War veteran, is divorced, and has two children whom he sees weekly. He has maintained a B+ average at our college and his life appears to be going along well at this point.

During the interview we discuss both public and private corporations; he has worked in both arenas. His conclusion is that size, that is, bigness, causes inefficiency in both types of work environments. The interview ends with me pressing him on his ultimate educational goal-law school.

* *

Interviewer: Hello, Herb. Thanks for letting me interview you. Can you give me about a half-hour, forty minutes?

Student: Yeah, I have a class in about an hour. It's no problem.

Interviewer: I would like to know what brought you here, and what you're going to do when you leave here. Start from the beginning.

Student: Well, I had completed an Associate of Business degree in Management from Lorain County Community College. I had changed employers-from LTV Steel to the Post Office, and I decided that I wanted to get into a supervision position-to move up to management.

Interviewer: In the Post Office?

Student: Yes. And in order to compete better, I thought I'd better get something more current, because some of the people there had had some additional educational background. So I saw a course in supervision specifically designed for people who aren't technically oriented. Then I took a purchasing course, only because my girlfriend was reluctant to go to college. She said if I'd go for purchasing, she would go. I had that course already, but I thought, 'okay fine'; that's another reason why I came here. My original goal was to get a degree in Industrial Management. Once I started to take a couple of courses, I could see that with just a few more courses, I could transfer to another institution. So now that's my main reason for coming here.

Interviewer: You mentioned several things...items...I want to ask you about. Number one, transferring to another institution, then already having your degree, and your girlfriend. So let's take it in that order. Where do you want to transfer to?

Student: I haven't made up my mind completely, but it is either going to be Akron University or Cleveland State. Probably Cleveland State. I would like to get a Bachelor's of Business Administration degree. I know I will really need that for middle management. The associate degree is fine for getting into supervision, but I don't think it's going to get me much farther than that. Actually the bachelor's degree is not my ultimate goal-my ultimate goal is to be an attorney, but I don't know if I'm ever going to get through all the schooling to get to that final stage. Right now my current reachable goal is to get a Bachelor's of Business Administration.

Interviewer: What's the next step beyond supervisor at the Post Office?

Student: You either move upwards to General Supervisor, or you make a lateral move to Supervisor of Mail, Supervisor of Data Collection, Supervisor of Registeries...

Interviewer: Different departments?

Student: Yes, different departments with different responsibilities; they each give you different opportunitites for moving up.

Interviewer: If you moved up, would the BBA be the requirement, or is it matter of a civil service test?

Student: There is no civil service test, probably more politics than anything else.

Interviewer: I don't think that is a secret...I mean the politics.

Student: No, it's very political even to get the line supervisor position. I'm hanging on by my teeth. (Laughs.) I don't have a problem with discrimination, because I have worked with minorities, and grew up with minorities, but it's so funny to be on the opposite end of the discrimination. It's one thing to read about it-to be aware of it happening to other people, and it's another thing to be on the receiving end of it.

Interviewer: Right. It's easy to talk about as an abstraction, but when it happens to you, it's hurtful. If you got your next promotion, would it be downtown? Would you have a choice, or isn't that even relevant.

Student: There's really no choice, and it really isn't relevant, because if you want to make any movement, you've got to stay downtown. You can leave downtown, and you go to say, stations, but you're going to lose your mobility, and there's a possibility that you'll get locked in. If you really want to make it...to go big, then you go to D.C., or what they call the Potomac; that's of course, where the higher administrative positions are.

Interviewer: Let me ask you: would a BBA be the appropriate credential for upper management in the Post Office or would a law degree...

Student: Law degree. That would cinch it. You'd be in. I don't care what the Supreme Court says, they couldn't ignore you then...they couldn't pass you up then.

Interviewer: You think your life is going to be in the Post Office? Are you going to stay at the Post Office?

Student: No, I see myself some years from now probably leaving, because although there's a lot of security, there isn't much challenge. I don't think I have much chance breaking into the political "in" group that's there. I think, though, I would like to go back to something in the private sector, a Fortune 500 company, at least, where I could maybe get into systems management, or personnel management, or labor relations. Something I'm familar with-something I've worked in plus something I've studied, or am studying.

Interviewer: Let me go back a step. When you worked for LTV, what did you do?

Student: I started out as a common laborer-worked in the blast furnace-worked there for a year or two. Changed and went to the Hot Strip Mill. Started there as a laborer and worked my way up to leader, then got bumped back down to laborer because of the ever-changing cycles. Everything is cyclical in the mill. Production is either sky-high or you're laid-off; it's one or the other. The only thing that's really of interest...that interested me as far as what jobs I held, and the responsibilities I held, was I worked as a Quality Circle Leader for two years there. That's the only bright spot out of the whole experience.

I finished my Associate in Business while I was there, and would say the steel mill is probably what made me go back to school. I had gone to school when I was first married and just out of the service, but I didn't bother to finish. When I got into the mill, I was making good money. Then about...about five or six years down the road, it became obvious-especially when the merger took place-that the mill...I never felt they were going to last, especially after buying up all that debt. So I went back to school, and it's funny, just as I'd finished getting my degree, there was a postal exam that was announced. I took it, just on a whim, and not because I had any desire to go to the Post Office. It worked out well. I got my degree. I had some experience in Quality Circles, and that helped out a lot. I took some courses from Ohio State through the AFL-CIO, you know, labor relations and grievance handling, union stewardship arbitration, that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: That's got to be interesting.

Student: Yeah. It is, and from my perspective, having taken management courses plus being an assistant manager of a store for three years, I know both sides of the fence. I've an appreciation of both management and labor's view. That's the goal I have in studying law. I'll stay right with labor relations; I think having worked both, studied both, I have an appreciation of both views.

Interviewer: Herb, is it fair to compare private industry with the public sector? I mean in business.

Student: Yes, I think it is...it's comparative when you speak of...when you're talking about a large corporation-something with a lot of people in it. There are great inefficiencies involved.

Interviewer: That's what I want to get to. Is there really that much difference in efficiency?

Student: I don't think so.

Interviewer: I mean...just look at this industry, steel. It just, it almost went "belly-up." You don't do that...that doesn't happen if you are reasonably efficient.

Student: It's been a dinosaur. It was a dinosaur and nobody knew it.

Interviewer: It was really a shared monopoly. No competition.

Student: No real competition. Now we know it. Government, I see, as being no different.

Interviewer: I can remember when the auto industry in the late '60's and early '70's, had such a great reputation as being aggressive companies. Well, when you're the only game in town, you can do well. Everybody was saying how good our Harvard MBA's were, and that businesses in the rest of the world couldn't touch us. I used to say,'they can't touch us because we have two oceans separating us, that's why.' I'm sure there's some dynamite, efficient companies out there. But, by and large, I don't know that criticism is valid for one and not the other.

Student: I think they are bedfellows. The only efficient organization that I've ever participated in was always small.

Interviewer: Public or private, as long as it's small...

Student: Yeah. As long as it's small because you can keep controls on them, but as soon as you get big...

Interviewer: Layers of bureaucracies.

Student: Right. We cover up with a lot of paperwork. On paper everything looks good.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. I've seen that.

Student: I've seen that both in private and...

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, right here too. We're not that different. Now let me go back and ask when you got married.

Student: I was twenty-years-old, right out of the service. I was married thirteen years. The funny part about that was she kind of sensed that once I graduated we weren't going to stay together much longer. She was pretty much right. As the marriage got older, it didn't grow; rather we kind of grew apart. She was pretty much...she had never really changed much. I was growing, changing, and maturing, but she didn't. She didn't have the incentive or assertiveness. We didn't actually get a divorce; we got a dissolution. It's another major change that affects me, because now, I do spend more time studying and reading. I don't like to watch TV. If I want to watch a movie, I go to a movie theatre. I do have a girlfirend, but she understands that school is more important to me than anything else. Even my sons understand that.

Interviewer: It's usually the other way around-it's usually the guy getting settled into married life-playing softball and watching TV seven days a week.

Student: They marry a surrogate mother.

Interviewer: The woman usually is the one who says, 'I want to have something more.' I know women who are coming in here that are bright and assertive, who are trying to understand themselves and the world, and the guys are back home saying, 'What do you want to go to school for?'

Student: The husband says, 'Everything is fine-what's the problem?'

Interviewer: The guy usually doesn't want to grow-he gets comfortable, and wants somebody to take care of him. So, I think you are unique. I think you are in the minority. You mentioned children...you have one? Two?

Student: Two...two sons-seventh grade and first grade.

Interviewer: How's your relationship with them?

Student: Great. In fact, one will not do his homework unless I help him. He'll say, 'Mom, you don't know how to do this; Dad can Help me.' Especially whenever it comes to math.

Interviewer: How about parents...are they living?

Student: One...my mother. My father died when I was eighteen.

Interviewer: Why didn't you go to college when you first got out of high school?

Student: Well, it was the issue of money, and the Viet Nam War going on, and I was subject to the draft; so I volunteered. That way I could pick up the GI Bill when I got out. Also, looking back, I was afraid to go to college right out of high school. At one time I wanted to be an accountant; I think the only reason I wanted to be that was because my uncle was an accountant.

Interviewer: Same with me. My uncle was a school teacher. We tend to identify with what's around us...sure.

Student: When I did get out of the service, I got into it. I liked it, accounting that is, but I couldn't see it as my future.

Interviewer: How long were you out of Lorain Community College before you came here? Do you remember, roughly?

Student: I graduated June of '85, and came here fall of '86 just to take the one course. I was trying to get my girlfriend to try some courses here. She would take the classes only if I signed up with her.

Interviewer: You had probably done well at Lorain...didn't you?

Student: I got a little over a B average, but I never had much trouble with the course work. The only time I ever had trouble was when the instructor didn't seem to be all that interested in teaching the class, as much as having the class learn all the material on its own. Too much outside work. That happened twice. In both incidents I dropped the course.

Interviewer: By and large how are the instructors?

Student: I'd say ninety percent are terrific.

Interviewer: That's comparable to most any other institution.

Student: Right. You're always going to get ten percent.

Interviewer: (Laughs.) Right. It's kind of like the Post Office in that regard. Good, I want to jump back to the Post Office. You said you just got a promotion to supervisor. Is that right?

Student: Right. It's a temporary position. It's Acting Supervisor-it's not a permanent position. It's like, show us what you can do, and if you do alright, you'll go before the Board; or, we may let you go before the Board to petition for a permanent position.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the promotion was a result of what you did here, or would you have gotten it anyway, just on your own?

Student: I might have gotten it if I waited long enough. Although I drop hints here and there about what I've done in the past, with my educational background. I think I got it faster because I was able to say, 'Listen, I'm taking this at Tri-C.' As a matter of fact we got a notice not too long ago wanting to know if a program was developed at Tri-C for Postal Management, would anyone be interested? I filled out the form, and said I'm already enrolled in the program at Tri-C for Postal Management. I did get a reaction out of that; and they were curious about what I was taking.

I talked to the Regional Postmaster about quality circles. When I got done talking with him, I went in and talked to the local union president about quality circles. When I filled out my application for a management position, I put that down. I then learned that they were pulling all the applications to decide who they're going to start out as Acting Supervisors. It would have been a matter of time, but I think summing up, it was sooner because of my education.

Interviewer: I think you know how to make use of your education, but let me move...before we conclude this, let me jump to you getting your BBA, and applying to law school. That's a pretty big step-that's a rigorous exam, and a tough program. What makes you think you can do it?

Student: (There's a hesitation here-no answer.)

Interviewer: Come on, Herb, you're a local kid that just about graduated from high school, went into the service and is now working for the Post Office. (Interviewer starts to whistle...)

Student: Faith.

Interviewer: And.

Student: I don't know...just something about...I had two law classes I had to take for my other degree. When I took those law classes, for me, I just knew this was it. I aced both courses without any problem, and I enjoyed them-the homework, the discussions-I'd go in on my own time and talk to the instructor. It was just fascinating to me and it came easy to me. It was like mathematics, but only in written form. So it's been kind of natural ever since then. I have a couple of books on law, labor law... It's like some people, you know, will read a good novel. I like to pick up law books and read them. I just feel with my ability to maintain a B+ average, and be able to schedule my time, so I can get my studies done, that even though obtaining a law degree...maybe it's not realistic, but it just doesn't seem like there's any reason why I shouldn't be able to. Go to law school that is.

Interviewer: I said some things simply to provoke you. I think you'll find a way to accomplish it. It's going to be hard, probably a lot harder than you think it is, but you'll get there. Take it little by little; it'll come.

Student: Right. How do you get a two-year degree while rotating shifts in the steel mill? I've found in my life that there's always distractions, but if something is important to you, you'll get around those distractions. You'll reach the goal.

Interviewer: I think you're fortunate in that, when the time comes, there's at least two law schools-no there are three law schools here. You might have a choice about where you want to go. I wish you good luck, and I want to thank you for the interview.

Student: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Good-bye, Herb.

Student: Bye.

0002I

SUSAN SAID

This woman recently quit her job as a law librarian in a major Cleveland law firm, and is returning to college to pursue a degree in elementary education. She has a bachelor's degree in Political Science, which helped her get the job in the law firm, but which she was quite unhappy with. She is, as she states, a "born again" christian, and feels that because of her beliefs, she can make a difference in young people's lives as a teacher and role model.

We talk about the moves she has had to make in order to pursue a second career at middle-age, such as withdrawing all of her savings and pension monies and returning to live with her mother. She has comitted herself to this change and is feeling very good about it. Her best estimate is that she will be a certified, elementary education teacher in three years. It is a realistic goal.

After listening to this interview, I realize how soft-spoken she was. I believe this led me to be a bit more active in this interview--something I try to avoid. While slight of build, soft-spoken, and almost timid in her mannerism, my feeling is that this woman is internally strong, and doesn't falter easily. I believe she will make a very competent, warm, and nurturing teacher.

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Interviewer: Hello, Susan, have a seat.

Student: Hello.

Interviewer: Thanks for coming in. I'm going to ask you to start from the beginning, and let me know what you are doing here.

Student: Well, I wasn't happy with what I've been doing with my life, and I realized that if I have to work thirty more years before I can retire, I didn't want to spend them being miserable. I wanted to go into a field that would satisfy and fulfill me. I really didn't have any interest in going back to school...in education, until recently.

Interviewer: Can I interrupt for just a bit. I want to back up and ask you...you're a college graduate?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Bachelor's degree in...?

Student: Political Science.

Interviewer: There was no future?

Student: I lost interest.

Interviewer: That's understandable. It happens to a lot of people. So you came here with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and said, "I want to make something of this; I want to change this degree around."

Student: Yes. It's a lot different out in the real world than the ideas you have when you're going through school. You know, 'I'm going to do this and that,' or, 'I can do this.' You get out and it's like reality slaps you in the face. You know, 'This is not going to be as easy as I thought,' or, 'I really don't want to do this.' Once you start getting involved...theory and something on paper is one thing, but practicality and making a living from something are totally different.

Interviewer: You're right, it looks good in theory, but it's very different out there, which makes me wonder if we're doing a very good job here.

At any rate, you decided to get back here...how long have you been here? Is this your first quarter?

Student: Right.

Interviewer: Yes. I see you're taking a Health class. This is your first quarter, and you're preparing to...?

Student: Elementary education, to become a teacher.

Interviewer: I just talked with a woman, we talked about teaching. She said she was concerned about the money.

Student: You mean as far as starting salaries?

Interviewer: Yes. They look pretty good to me, though.

Student: I don't even know what they are. (Laughs.)

Interviewer: They're anywhere from eighteen to twenty thousand.

Student: That's not bad for starting.

Interviewer: That's for nine months. Looks good to me.

Student: I think people have their expectations too high. They come out of college and expect to get exorbitant salaries. That's crazy. There's a few here and there that are able to pick up something big. I had a friend in his late thirties. He worked for RTA. He went back to school to become an attorney. He got through law school, and started off making less money than I did as a law librarian. He was making seventeen thousand dollars a year.

Interviewer: I'm not surprised.

Student: Sure, there are attorneys in the large companies that start at sixty thousand a year.

Interviewer: There's a lot more in the phone book looking for work. Have you ever opened up a phone book and looked through...well, sure you have. Let me jump to that. You worked as a law librarian. What did you think about all those attorneys?

Student: They're impossible. That's one reason that I thought I would much rather work with children. I teach at my church on Sunday mornings, so I do...I pretty much know what I'm getting into. I actually do it on a practical level. I know what it is. I'm tired of dealing with impossible people.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you about that. Why are attorneys so impatient? Do they expect too much from people who don't have law degrees? Was it the fact that you are a woman...

Student: Sometimes. There are a lot more women attorneys now, though. When I left, they started to hire some more women.

Interviewer: Was your law firm a big one?

Student: When I left there were one-hundred-twenty attorneys in two cities. We had a Columbus branch.

Interviewer: You're going to love teaching. It's certainly going to be scaled down for you.

Student: Well, there is just something about working with children...their innocence for one thing. I feel that I have good strong morals and values, and I can be in a position to influence children. I find more and more that parents relinquish a lot of their responsibility to the school.

Interviewer: You bet they do and unfortunately so.

Student: I just feel that my standards are high, and this would be an opportunity for me to make some kind of contribution to people. It would be such a change.

Interviewer: I think you're right. Once you close the door, you control the pace, the tenor, and the attitudes in the classroom. I have a young daughter who is in the fourth grade right now. She really likes her teacher. The teacher closes the door and gets done what she needs to get done in her own very special way. You're going to like it very much.

Student: I think I will.

Interviewer: Your background. Are you a Clevelander?

Student: Right.

Interviewer: What about parents?

Student: My father died when I was sixteen. Neither of my parents finished high school.

Interviewer: Brothers or sisters?

Student: I have one sister. She went to Cleveland State for two years and then got married. She may come here.

Interviewer: That's not unusual. We get a lot of people coming back trying to finish up degrees. Women in school that got married and then pregnant, and couldn't finish; they're coming back. Did you go to college right after high school?

Student: No. I worked for about four years. I started college when I was twenty-two.

Interviewer: When you went, did you go straight through for your degree? Where did you go?

Student: Yes. I went to Cleveland State.

Interviewer: You were a Political Science major. Did you have any asperations for law school?

Student: I did before I started working in the field. I soon forgot about that, though. (Laughs.)

Interviewer: But originally?

Student: I thought about it, because I had some undergraduate law courses, and they were interesting. I thought, 'Hmmm, that's a possibility.' Then I had friends who went on to law school, and they said it wasn't anything like what they had anticipated. It's very competitve and tough. Then once I started working in the law firm, I just lost interest. I'm just not aggressive and ambitious enough for that field. I just want to make a living by working and applying myself, and to feel like I'm making a contribution. I don't need to make a great amount money. That does not concern me. I like to have nice things, but I don't concern myself with working myself to death to get them.

Interviewer: I understand. Let me get back on track here. You received a four-year degree from Cleveland State, then got a job in a law firm. How long did you work there, or do you still work there?

Student: Nine years. I quit in June.

Interviewer: You quit in June to come back here to pick up classes and to transfer back to Cleveland State. How are we doing? Have we been able to give you the classes?

Student: So far so good.

Interviewer: How are you doing? Are you scared about this?

Student: No, not really scared; it's an adjustment, though. It's hard, after having a job and doing what you want, to have to re-adjust your whole day-to-day schedule to incorporate school, study, and work part time. My time has to be really organized.

Interviewer: And weekends would go into reading books or writing papers, then back to classes again on Monday.

Student: Oh, I remember.

Interviewer: But school is a good time. It's rewarding to learn, to open your mind and experience different things. It's also a prison and you're never out of it. It's always on your mind, and there is always something due.

Student: It also can be an escape from reality too. You know, you take what you are interested in, and not what your career choice is, or should be. That's what I did, and that's why I wound up in so much trouble. I took what I was interested in. My grades might have been better also.

Interviewer: How about the Health class? Has that been challenging?

Student: I don't agree with a lot of what the instructor is saying.

Interviewer: That's not unusual. Welcome back to college.

Student: I will give them back what they want to hear from me on an exam, though.

Interviewer: Adjust it, use what you can and discard what is not appropriate. The reason why I ask the question is, I was talking to a teacher down in that area. He said the course is no longer the kind of required health we used to take. They're trying to adjust it to be a more sophsicated class. I'm talking about AIDS and advances in health care regarding diseases and things like that. What else do you have...what other classes are you in this quarter?

Student: Music, which is difficult for me, because I don't have a music background, and algebra. I haven't had math in twenty years.

Interviewer: That's not unusual. Hang in there and you'll get by it. You're going to take these courses and move them into a bachelor's degree. Can you salvage a lot from your former bachelor's degree?

Student: Yes, maybe two year's work, but there are so many required education courses at Cleveland State that I don't know if I can get through them in two years. I think a lot of it depends on how frequently they offer the courses and then fitting them into my schedule. The other requirements, the general education requirements, are mostly finished.

Interviewer: Do you think once you're at Cleveland State--you made reference to them offering the classes, my hunch is they're day classes--you will be able to go days?

Student: I hope so.

Interviewer: Can I ask where you're living now?

Student: Garfield Heights.

Interviewer: I mean by yourself, with parents, with friend?

Student: I've lived alone, on my own, for a long time, but the only way I could do this was to move back in with my parents. The first time I went to school I had a grant, and a scholarship, so everything was paid for. Now, this time, I'm paying for it. It's a lot of money. I had a pension fund at work and I'm taking money out of that, and my savings, to live on. It is the only way I can go back. I couldn't pay rent, utility bills, etc., so my mother suggested I move back in with her to cut expenses.

Interviewer: Let me ask some questions. I hope they're not too personal. You can tell me to mind my own business if they are. How has it been at home?

Student: Difficult.

Interviewer: Who's handling it better, you or your mother?

Student: (Laughs.) I don't know. Really, my mother for sure. My grandparents lived with her after my father died. They both passed away within the last few years. What I'm getting at is that you can be fifty-years-old, and if your mother is still alive, she'll still worry about you. Being there, she wants to keep track of me.

Interviewer: God knows what she was thinking of when you were on your own all those years. Well, you probably have what another two years to go?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: You'll make it. It'll work out. Any feed back on coming back here? Did your sister tell you you were crazy? Did anybody?

Student: No. My sister lives in Colorado right now, and I don't talk to her very much. Not really. Most people think it's great, though.

Interviewer: I was just setting you up. I have already interviewed about eighteen people, one a woman who quit working at Honeywell. She had a pension, and a good job, but was taking her work home weekends. What I mean is she...her job was becoming her whole life. She is doing the exact same thing you're doing. She's receiving all kinds of support, not financial, she's had to move back home like you, but emotional support. I think you're going to get a lot of support. You need to be very comfortable with this. There are a lot of people out there doing, or wanting to do what you're doing.

You even look like a student. You really look comfortable here, and you appear like you're enjoying this. Well...let me ask, do you feel like you're sticking out like a sore thumb?

Student: I think I might have felt that way if... I don't know. In a way I do, and in a way I don't. A lot of people tell me I blend in.

Interviewer: You do. You blend in beautifully.

Student: You know, physically I've lived more than half my life, but mentally I'm still twenty-two. Mentally, I'm still young, so I really don't feel, in that regard, out of it. I *have* noticed older students, though. It's not like it use to be thirty years ago when anybody who went to college was eighteen to twenty-two years old.

Interviewer: You probably see this without really realizing it, but I'd say about ten percent of our enrollment during the day are people your age or older. At night this place is ninety to ninety-five percent adults. It's very gratifying. We love it because we're running out of young people to educate.. I know we are lagging behind, but we are attempting to accommodate the older students. That's the next question I want to ask you. How have your instructors been?

Student: So far good; they try to be accommodating, at least as far as my own classes so far.

Interviewer: Do they call you 'kids'?

Student: No, not really.

Interviewer: Well, we were caught in that mind-set for a long time, but we're coming out of that. We're becoming more and more discriminating in that area...I mean re-focusing our mission to deal with adults.

Student: The last thing I want is to be treated like an eighteen-year-old; I'm an adult.

Interviewer: Is there anything you can tell me about the experience of coming back here? How long did it take you to make up your mind to do this? How long did you threaten to do this?

Student: I have to be honest with you and tell you how this really came about. I'm a born-again christian, and never really liked my job. It was tolerable up till about the last seven months before I quit. The stress was so bad I could not function, and I was getting very sick.

Interviewer: The emotional part.

Student: That's right. I decided one day I was going to go into education. I felt a real calling by the Lord, that this is what he really wanted me to do. I'm just being obedient doing it. I've never been in education, but this is exactly the way I feel I'm being led. I'm just real comfortable with it now, and I think it is going to work for me.

Interviewer You should be comfortable. You're on to something here. Don't be reluctant to express that. I think that what you're doing is extremely healthy.

Student: I thought I knew what I was doing for twenty-five years, but living the way I did, it was just one miss after another. Now it's just like everything is falling into it's place.

Interviewer: If you've found something you're comfortable with, you'll enjoy your life. There is a lot happening in education. There are a lot of changes, and I believe most of them to be for the better. We have to make some adjustments. I think we're going to need teachers; we're flushing out a lot of poor ones that stayed in only because it was a job. I think you're going to be in the right place at the right time.

Student: There are so many working mothers now. I initially thought about Early Child Education. The day care center I work for has just hired a kindergarten teacher. It's like if women are going to continue working, the children are going to have to be taken care of.

Interviewer: It's not going to stop. The opportunities are going to get better; we're going to need more. I would encourage you to feel good about what you're doing. Financially, do you think you'll make it?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: You need to get to Cleveland State and find out what they want you to do. I have the name of a person in Teacher Certification. I'll give it to you for you to call. She is used to people entering teaching with differnt degrees--kind of retrofitting their careers. She'll be able to tell you exactly what you need.

Student: Okay. Thank you.

Interviewer: Socially, how are you doing? Do you get out and enjoy yourself?

Student: Most of my social life is centered around my church. I attend a fellowship there. I go to the Cleveland Orchestra and there are a couple of things I really enjoy that I do.

Interviewer: After this quarter I think your schedule will loosen up a little bit.

Student: Until I get adjusted to the routine again, it will be difficult. It's just that after all these years trying to get back into the swing of things, it's kind of tough.

Interviewer: Emotionally and physically this is going to be your toughest quarter.

Student: I believe it.

Interviewer: Academically you'll have some tougher ones, but emotionally you won't have anything near as hard as what you're going through right now.

Student: I'm glad to hear that.

Interviewer: When you returned, was it awkward? Was there much red tape involved?

Student: There was some confusion. I had to keep calling the admissions office. I had trouble getting hold of a course description book. Somebody told me you had to buy one; another person told me that you couldn't get one until you were accepted at the school. I thought, "that doesn't sound right." It seemed like whoever I happened to call or talk to around here didn't seem to know the answers, so it was a bit frustrating.

Interviewer: We need to improve that part of it. The initial entry here is awkward. It is, I think, in most places. I'm going make some things known to our Administration based on what you and other people tell me. We'll get better at it. When you registered, and then went to your class the first day, you probably were scared to death. Right?

Student: (Laughter.) No, not really.

Interviewer: Good for you.

Student: No, I think I knew what I was getting into, and what had to be done.

Interviewer: Generally speaking, is everything going well?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Can we do anything else to help?

Student: Nothing I can think of right now.

Interviewer: I can do something by giving you that name and phone number for teacher certification, but right now I want to thank you very much for letting me interview you.

Student: You're welcome.

DAVE SHOOP

The son of a machinist and a former machinist himself, this fellow has been laid off from his job. He is tired of the cyclic nature of his machinist trade and has, for many years, wanted to become an Emergency Medical Technician. He has done well so far and has completed sixteen credits of his EMT associate degree. It is now time to begin his science requirements. During the interview he points out the injustice done to his father by his father's employer and states emphatically that he does not want to end up in similar circumstances.

Some of his comments portray a street-wise individual, who now wants to move on with his life and build a career on what he enjoys doing. He has a family, and for the next year or so will have to be content with having his wife be the primary financial support of the family. This is his second time at the college.

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Interviewer: Good morning. Have a seat.

Student: Good morning.

Interviewer: What brings you here?

Student: I'm coming back to school after being out for about three years.

Interviewer: Do you have something in mind. I mean is it a specific degree or program we offer?

Student: Yeah It's the EMT...the Emergency Medical Technician program.

Interviewer: Well, that one we have. It's in our division of Health Technologies. Are you thinking of the one-year certificate or the associate degree?

Student: I'm here to get it all done-the associate degree.

Interviewer: Will you attend full time or part time?

Student: Full time. Like I said, it's time to get it finished.

Interviewer: Are you working?

Student: No. I'm laid off.

Interviewer: Can I ask what you did while working?

Student: I was a machinist.

Interviewer: How long have you been a machinist?

Student: Eleven years and I've been laid off five times. I've done everything during those eleven years from sweeping the floor to running the shop. I started sweeping and ended up a foreman and doing everything in between.

Interviewer: Were you in a union?

Student: No, I was never the union type.

Interviewer: Would that have made any difference...I mean if you were in a union.

Student: I don't think too highly of unions myself. That's probably the reason I'm having the trouble I'm having. Maybe I'm wrong, but I believe unions pushed us up over the limit. You know, you got guys at GM making twenty-five dollars an hour, including their benefits, for sweeping the floor and people wonder why car prices are twelve, fourteen, fifteen thousand dollars.

Interviewer: What did vou do when you first got out of high school?

Student: I worked in a machine shop.

Interviewer: Did you think about continuing your education, like maybe going to college?

Student: No, because I got out of high school and I was out. That was it for me. You've heard that old saying, 'I wish I knew then what I know now.' You know it's true. That's what I'm saying.

Interviewer: I worked when I got out of high school. Can I ask if you are married?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: Children?

Student: Yes. Right out of high school.

Interviewer: How many children?

Student: Two.

Interviewer: How did you find out about our college? How did you first walk in the door?

Student: I was laid off, and had nothing on my hands but time. I really just needed a kick in the butt, so I figured I got nothing to lose-I have the time so I came in and applied. I had to take the placement test and they suggested the 092 and 096 English courses to try to get my English back in order again. So I took the English and I did well. I guess the first course was the whole ticket to the rest. So right there that led me to believe that what the heck, I can do this.

Interviewer: I see you got B's in your English.

Student: Yeah, and you know I felt good about school ever since that day, and I just kept coming back.

Interviewer: Was the instructor a Mr. Morrow?

Student: I wish I could tell you...

Interviewer: A young guy?

Student: No, no, it was an older guy. I can't remember his name.

Interviewer: Um, that was developmental English.

Student: Right.

Interviewer: Then I see you went into college composition and got a B, again.

Student: Right. What I did was take the 092 and 096 papers that I had written, and got good grades on, and rewrote them into better and higher levels. You know, made them more elaborate. Then I moved on from there.

Interviewer: I don't believe that there is anything here at the college that you can't do with enough preparation, at least from what I can see. The anatomy courses will be difficult; there's no doubt about that. There's a lot of memory involved there, but certainly nothing that you can't do.

Student: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Those types of courses are mostly memory, and that takes discipline, but there is nothing you should be afraid of; of course you already proved that.

Student: The only thing that worries me is math. It seems I'll always be worried about math. Maybe there was something...maybe a teacher or some experience that I had when I was little that has given me this fear of math.

Interviewer: Well, tell me why you were afraid of it? I'd like to know why?

Student: Why are some people afraid of guns? You know, some people are afraid to drive. I don't know what their reasons. I wish I knew why I'm afraid of math. I do OK with it in the shop, but in class...it's different.

Interviewer: The math for your program and for our Nursing program is the Allied Health Sciences Math. It's largely the metric system and the system of measures and dosages used by health care professionals. There's nothing in the class that you can't do. I think you can do a good job in there. By the way have you thought about our Nursing program?

Student: Well, not really. I didn't want to put all the pressure on my wife for one thing, because I would have had to spend every minute of the day in order to do nursing. If I'd started out...I'm not saying I couldn't do it, I'm just saying if I would have started out sooner, like coming right out of high school, you know, and had that in mind and bang went into it whole hearted. At any rate, I figure that there's not much difference. I'll just back up a little bit. And besides, I could always go back and try nursing or something else. Right now I just want...I want to get my foot in the door first. I got a good taste in my mouth now. I want to keep it there. You know I still think ...no, I know I can do it, I still know I can do it, but I want to keep that frame of mind, I don't want to overload myself.

Interviewer: The last time you were here in '83 you did well.

Student: Right.

Interviewer: There's no question about you doing well.

Student: Um, you know I was only taking like two courses at a time?

Interviewer: Well...?

Student: That's how I'm gonna have to do that again but, when it came to EMT I said wait.

Interviewer: Were you working at that time?

Student: Well, I was working at the nursing home. I had been laid off as a machinist.

Interviewer: That type of work doesn't bother you? I mean the health care work.

Student: No, it doesn't. Well, it does, I think it bothers everybody, but when you work with it, working around it, you just...I don't know it just seems all of that goes away. It gets to be your turn, so you got to go for it. You don't think about it. When you're standing there looking at people, well then, yeah. If you see an accident on the road and all of a sudden here comes the EMT people or somebody working on somebody, well at that time yeah, you got time to gawk at the blood and grossness, but when your working with it, it's different.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's your job.

Student: You know it's like okay, we got three...and boom, boom, boom, it just doesn't enter your mind.

Interviewer: The more we talk, the more I think that the EMT program will be a beautiful first step for you, and that within two year's time, you can get yourself a decent job in a field you enjoy, and be ready for the next step, which may be nursing or any number of related medical fields.

Student: Yeah, that's what I like about it. You don't have to stop. I keep thinking that I'm taking a step at a time in a field where you know that every seven years the bottom won't fall out, where you don't have to worry about someone making a better machine or something like that. People will always get sick, you know.

Interviewer: The field isn't as good as it used to be, however.

Student: Yeah, don't get me wrong, sure, sure. I know that.

Interviewer: But as you said it's always there-people get sick.

Student: Right. Yeah.

Interviewer: How are things at home? Your wife...is she wondering about this?

Student: Well, yeah, she's, you know...she's the bread winner now. Sometimes...but really-I'm the one that wonders; it's that male ego bullshit, you know.

Interviewer: I understand. Can you talk with her?

Student: Oh, yeah. This is partly her idea. She's said she wants me out of the machine shop because she's seen me go through the jobs and the layoffs time and time again. She doesn't want me to work in machine shops anymore. I always wonder if they're going to call me back and she says, 'I hope they don't.' When they don't, I say, 'What are we going to do?' and she says, 'We just take it out of the bank. Go back to school. I want to see you go into that.' I say, 'okay.' That's why I'm here. I really have the support from home. It's not like my wife is saying anything wrong to me or putting me down.

Interviewer: She would like you in the medical field?

Student: Yeah. You know medical fields have always intrigued me. If somebody would get hurt in the shop, you know, I was always there. I didn t know what the hell I was doing most of the time, really, but you know, you would see this guy running north, and this one running south or something. I would just get in there and do my best.

Interviewer: Well, you're looking at a guy that would probably be running East! Do you have a decent life when you're in school the three quarters of the year?

Student: Yeah. We get by.

Interviewer: Good.

Student: I get unemployment benefits, but I don't know how unemployment is going to take me going to school. There's a part on the unemployment form when you go in and apply... there is something on there that asks did you attend school. You know, and I wonder if I say 'yes, to better myself,' are they going to stop my benefits because I'm going to school now. Is it worth my while toput that down, or just lie to them because they'll probably never find out. You know, I'd feel like a fool if they stopped my payments. I'm really not available for full-time work while I'm attending school. I just don't know what the rule is.

Interviewer: I think you're allowed. Why don't you suggest to them that you would like to attend school.

Student: I just don't know how they'd work that. I'd like to tell them truthfully, you know.

Interviewer: Ask them and then take the appropriate action based on their answer.

Student: I'm not gonna jeopardize my benefits, or them taking food out of my kids mouths. Yeah. Okay, I'll ask first.

Interviewer: Speaking of unemployment and work, how was working as a machinist? I mean besides the lack of work?

Student: Well in the beginning, there was nothing wrong with it. The work was plentiful, and the working conditions were pretty good. You could quit...I mean you could find one job one afternoon, work it for three days-I'm talking around 1973, somewhere around there-you'd work it three days, and if you didn't like it, you could go a few miles down the road and get another job. You know with a half way decent head on your shoulders and any kind of schooling you could do that. Now it's getting to the point where the work has gotten...you know, Japan and other countries have taken over. Then there is the southern movement of businesses. There's a mixture of everything. The pressure has gotten pretty bad for the worker now; it's no longer fun. Politics and pettiness, somebody always looking over your shoulder. It's ridiculous...it's really ridiculous and it's tough. There was a time when you could go to work, you had your job and so many hours were involved. Now you go to work to do your job and you have three guys pushing you. You know, and somebody upstairs who doesn't know beans from bullets about the shop is coming downstairs creating all kinds of trouble. Then, for some reason, every seven years the bottom falls out.

Interviewer: It's always been that way? Seven years?

Student: It's always been that way...every seven years, give or take a year, the bottom falls out of the machine tool industry.

Interviewer: It's always a down-turn.

Student: I don't know why? I don't know if it's created by the government or what; I don't know why it happens. But if you talk to people who know, you'll see that there is a decline every seven years. You know it's kind of like locusts. (Laughs.) Every seven years it slows down to the point where people with twenty to twenty-five years start worrying about their jobs. I don't want to go through that anymore.

You know my father worked at a place for thirty-five years, and when he turned fifty-nine years old, they handed him a pink slip. Things had changed. The original owner of the company had died, and the son took over. He was in diapers when my father started there. You know now if the father was still running the company, things probably would have been be different, but to hand the guy a pink slip after doing that type of work for you for thirty-five years is pretty lousy. I mean my father only had three years to go till retirement. I couldn't do that to someone.

Interviewer: That type of employer behavior is happening more and more.

Student: I'm telling you I've seen it. You know you're just about there...they see you getting close and they just wipe you out. They put on a new guy with another clock number and the company goes on its merry way. Well, it's not going to happen to me. I'm going to make sure of that.

Interviewer: You're lucky, you have a shot at an education.

Student: It's not too late. That's why I'm here. This place can do it for me. I know that. Look, I couldn't afford to go away or go to a private college. I'm meeting some decent people and like it here. I just couldn't do it if I had to go to Ohio State or something like that. This place is just right for us older people and I know a lot of people who are going through the same thing I'm going through.

Interviewer: The average age of our student population is twenty-eight...no, this year its twenty-nine-years old.

Student: I believe it. I can see it. A lot of those people, the older ones, were like me. They thought they'd have a good job all their lives. No more, it doesn't work that way anymore.

Interviewer: Do you have any doubts about the EMT program?

Student: No, not really. Let me tell you something. I'm no dummy...

Interviewer: I didn't mean to...

Student: No, no, I know what you mean. You don't know what I mean. Look, I've been out there long enough. I know how to do things. I know when I have to push or not push and I know when to shut my mouth and when to open my mouth. I know how to get along with people-even those I don't like.

Interviewer: Oops. I get the message-no doubts.

Student: No, not really. I got the time, the desire, and the smarts to do it. That's between you and me.

Interviewer: How about your wife? You can have everything, but if you don't have her, you're in trouble. If you undertand what I'm saying.

Student: Yeah, you're right, but no, she's pushing me. She's with me.

Interviewer: I remember now; she said that she hoped you didn't get another machinist job.

Student: Right.

Interviewer: Is she working?

Student: Yeah. She works for a bakery. Empire Baking Co. She decorates cakes and likes it, too. It's almost an art, and she likes it.

Interviewer: Did she ever think of, or talk about coming to school here?

Student: No. She's not the college, or school, type.

Interviewer: Now, don't be so quick to say that. Think about yourself. You probably thought the same way about school yourself.

Student: Yeah. Well, maybe, maybe one of these days...you never know.

Interviewer: I'd like to turn to your degree program if we can.

Student: Sure.

Interviewer: You've done very well in both the English, that is, the composition, and in the psychology courses.

Student: Right.

Interviewer: It's time for your sciences. I'm recommending the anatomy and physiology course for this quarter.

Student: That's Ok.

Interviewer: They're not easy, you know.

Student: Yeah, I've heard and I've seen the book, but it's time. Like I said, I know I can do the work.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm putting down the 128 course, the beginning anatomy.

Student: Ok.

Interviewer: It'll be tough, but interesting.

Student: I know I'm interested in the bones and parts of the body. I want to learn that stuff.

Interviewer: Along with that, you'll be taking your second psych course and the medical terminology course...any questions?

Student: Can I take them anytime?

Interviewer: Yup. Day, evening, weekend, off campus, or at any campus. They're all the same.

Student: I'll probably take them all here at this campus.

Interviewer: Good, then I'll probably see you. Any questions?

Student: None, right now.

Interviewer: I appreciate you taking the time for the interview, and I hope we can help you get to your new career. If I can do anything more for you, please stop back.

Student: I will, and thanks for listening.

Interviewer: Thank you for talking. Good bye.

0965I

JIM SWANSINGER

A fifty-seven year old retired Cleveland police officer who is now preparing for a second career in teaching. He talks about his childhood, police work, and his desire to continue school. At first, he seemed almost apologetic about his retirement, but after realizing that's why I wanted to interview him, he opens up and becomes eager to talk. Throughout the interview he engages in his own dialogue between himself and friends or family. He uses these-his own conversations with friends and relatives-to illustrate to me and to show examples of the points he is trying to make. We both reminice about our youth, and a kind of bond develops as a result of our common experiences as young boys. He was a delightful man, and must have been a terrific policeman.

* *

Interviewer: Good morning, Jim. I see that you're a retired policeman.

Student: Yes, I've been retired a few years now.

Interviewer: I'd like to know more about what you're doing here, about your change of life style or your new life, so to speak. I'm interested in how you got here, your background, and...well, what do you think? Can you give me 45-50 minutes?

Student: I think so.

Interviewer: You'll be on tape.

Student: Okay. Are you sure I'm the type of person...I used to be a policeman.

Interviewer: Did you retire from the police force?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Then, your the fella' I'm interested in.

Student: Well, a lot of people say, 'You're too young to retire. What are you going to do with your time?' I say, 'there are a thousand and one things to do.' You know, if I wasn't coming here, I'd be scuba diving, swimming, or vacationing, not vacationing per se, just looking around seeing what the world does-reading about it, anyway. Or reading, taking courses, learning to ski-doing all kinds of things. Does that sound right? I know when my dad retired, he went from window to window. My mom would say, 'Get out of the house! Go bowling or something. Go out drinking with the guys.' You know, when he retired that was it. He had a void in his life...he didn't know what to do.

Interviewer: Well, the difference is...I should say one of the differences is that your dad and my dad didn't have places like this. They just about made it...they were fortunate to make it through high school, let alone college. This is another world that they didn't have the opportunity to see.

Student: Right. You're right.

Interviewer: They didn't have the advantages that you and I have.

Student: No, they didn't.

Interviewer: This place is open. Most anybody can make use of this place.

Student: It's very nice.

Interviewer: I don't think a lot of people realize that.

Student: I don't think so either-that you're in college right away.

Interviewer: People say to me, 'Geezs, I just made it out of high school-what more do you want?' It shouldn't be like that.

Student: You know years ago like in my time, when you got out of high school what chances did you have? John Carroll was private, and hard to get into; Fenn College was engineering, and it was expensive. My parents told me that when I get out of high school that's the best they can do. I was already working three and four years during the summers and sneaking work in between and paying my parents ten or fifteen dollars a week. But like you say, I can see a big change with the availability of colleges and what you can do.

Interviewer: As a kid, did you ever set up pins at a bowling alley?

Student: (Laughs.) Oh yes!

Interviewer: Two in each hand, set them up, and wait for the ball to come down...

Student: Three in each hand!

Interviewer: Three...I could only do two! (Laughter.)

Student: We'd grab three in each hand...did you ever jump alleys?

Interviewer: I didn't jump alleys...oh, two, double up-sure. Ten cents a game and those pins would fly.

Student: Yeah. And when you were in the other alley picking them up, you know, you didn't have the automatic...of course being back there you had to set them down; then a lot of times you were jumping into the next alley thinking the pins were knocked down, but the ball was coming down and...many times I got hit. Well, you're young and you get the pins across the knees, and you can take it.

Interviewer: Speaking about your youth and your dad, what did you think you wanted to be when you were in high school?

Student: I think...I wanted to get into something to help people. Teaching...I couldn't see myself-because I worked in factories-I couldn't see working that grind, you know, take the piece put it out, take the piece and put it out. I probably would of liked to be a teacher. At least you help somebody, and you feel some accomplishment. Like when I got on the police department, I felt probably best...again I got on there because I thought I'd be helping people. I found that I liked it best when I was working the ambulance. Like delivering a baby; putting a tourniquet on an arm; or if you had that arm off, put a belt around to stop the blood; or just hold it by pressure and get to the hospital. You know, save a life. I'd go home and say, 'Boy, I saved John Carbone's (Interviewer's name) life.' 'Why did you do that?' 'Well, it's easy. He had his arm off and I put a rope around-or tie, or a belt-and I saved his life.' You felt good...you felt you'd accomplished something. But then again, that too, you know, that is as far as you can go, and I'm not blaming my parents, John, but I didn't have a home life and atmosphere to study in. I'll give some examples: We had a home, we lived on 131st and Chapelsite and that's Holy Family-that's East 131st by the Cordet-Miles area. Anyways the house was older and not insulated-none of them were, then. My bedroom was the only place you could really study. Mom had one light on in the kitchen and that's all you would put on. You didn't go into the front room or living room-it was only used for company. You lived in the kitchen and you had four or five people there all the time. People wouldn't come over to our house sometimes because they didn't think you were home on account of the kitchen was in the back and the front room was always dark. The upstairs, in the wintertime, was too cold and you would be freezing while you were trying to study. We had coal furnaces back then. Around 9:30 in the evening Mom would say to open up the register because you were going to go to bed in five or ten minutes; how much heat can come up from the coal furnace in that short of time? Well, then you got under those blankets and you laid like this...(Pulls hands up to his neck.).

Interviewer: They "banked" the heat.

Student: Yes, they threw ashes over it. So you got in bed and laid like that for hours-before you knew it-Mom was calling, 'Get up for school,'and then you would run like hell down the stairs to the kitchen, as it was generally warmer, because Mom was cooking breakfast. Then you went into the bathroom and ran warm water to warm up your hands. Nowadays...am I on tape?

Interviewer: Yes.

Student: Oh, I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Oh no, that's fine. I have a sixteen year old daughter and...

Student: I have a sixteen-year-old daughter, too.

Interviewer: At sixteen years old I was chopping ice and delivering milk. Not only was I out in cold weather, I was throwing ice in the cold weather, and I couldn't even keep the money I earned. I had to give it to my parents. My daughter is snuggled in a heated, centrally air-conditioned house. The point being, things have changed.

Student: I can see my children having it better. The house is warm-its 72 degrees in the winter all the time. Or they'll take a little heater up to their room. My daughter-its 95 degrees in her room. She takes those little heaters in her room and has lights on all over the place. In the summer we have central air, and they have their own rooms with plenty of light.

You know, I used to study under a light at my desk in this cold room-or hot in the summer. I remember asking my parents to buy a fan to get some air in the room; the answer was I don't need it. I couldn't see too good in the room, because Dad had a 40-watt bulb in the lamp. I remember going out and buying a 75-watt bulb, went to school and work one day, I come home and go to study and it seems dim. Here my father took the 75-watt bulb out and replaced it with the 40-watt again.

Interviewer: (Laughter.) Can't fool the old man.

Student: So you know the old story, you live under a person's roof, you live by their rules and regulations. I would say we had it rough. I think the kids, well...they don't think they have it too good, but when I compare mine to there's, I think they have the environment and conditions to do much better.

Interviewer: Bigger problems, though, you've got to give them that. They face bigger problems-mental and emotional. The complexity of what they can do, and what they have to do is much greater.

Student: Hmmm. I don't think so. Like my son is going to need a car and I'm going to give him my junker. Basically, when he needs money, I'll give it to him. My son will be going to medical school next year. He's talking about Northwestern, and you know, you're talking maybe twenty thousand a year. He has a car, he dresses for school like we dress. I never dressed like that. I had one pair of pants, two shirts and one jacket, and got them from my older brother. I think that children even though, Like you say, "It's more complex for them," they have a much better advantage then we had.

Interviewer: Tell me about the police job; did you see it as you're permanent job, or did you have another job in mind for your future?

Student: That was going to be my main job. I was like twenty-one when I got on the police department. high school, army, and then the police department.

Interviewer: How was it?

Student: The police department? I liked it.

Interviewer: Was it what you thought it would be?

Student: Yes. They had a good academy. Again, going back to that time they were very professional, strict, and you went by the rules. I complained to one sargeant that I didn't know if I could walk out there three hours in the cold with no relief, no anything. He said, 'Well, kid, if you don't like it there's 200 waiting for your job.' So you did what they told you. Then the unions came. The fellows getting on now have it much easier-ten times easier. I walked a beat on Hough Avenue. I was told to go into a bar on 79th, which was black, and then go across the street into a bar which was a southern...you know, "red-neck" bar, if I may say so.

They were fighting a war, and I was the one that had to go out there. When I think about it, I could have ended up dead. The fellows out there now, they won't do it. They go to their unions, which we did not have. They tell them their afraid to be alone, so they put in their union contract two men must walk a beat. They complained about that. Then they said that you have to have communications, so they gave them radios, and still that wasn't enough. Then they put them in patrol cars. So, see the difference from one man walking a rough street, to two men with radios and a car doing the exact same thing.

Interviewer: How long were you on the police force before you saw this change?

Student: I would say about ten to twelve years.

Interviewer: How long were you on the police force?

Student: Twenty-seven years.

Interviewer: When did you start at the College?

Student: I took a few courses when I got on the police department in '57. I took a couple courses...I think the College was working out of high schools. Brush High School, I believe Brush High was the name.

Interviewer: We were working out of Brush High until we built our permanent facilities, but we started in '63.

Student: Okay, I got out in '57...it was '63 when I started to take a few courses. I was in the Army, and I found out I had the GI bill. I thought, I might as well make use of that-and they paid. I used eight years going to college, going half-time...maybe less. I got about a year-and-a-half out of the eight years. I was also studying for promotions.

Interviewer: That's what I want to ask next. Did the police force encourage your continuing education, or was this your own...your own iniative.?

Student: At the onset most of the fellows wanted to do it themselves. Then as it got rolling, someone higher up says, 'This is a good thing. We are finding better personnel coming through the colleges,' so they started to offer incentives like a little more pay, not much, but, you know, certain incentives for people to attend college.

Interviewer: In general, did the policemen take advantage of that? Did they think about school and say, 'I'll be a better person and a better cop.'

Student: Yup. We could see the fellows attending college, and those not attending, and we could see a difference.

Interviewer: So we got you here in '63, and you were here part-time, on and off, till you retired.

Student: Yes, I started heavier about 1970. Then I started going half-time:two subjects a quarter, and as I said, I ended up with about a year-and-a-half of full-time work.

Interviewer: Meanwhile, what was your wife saying? Gone too many hours?

Student: She was. I was gone constantly...I worked full-time police, going to school two evenings a week, which also took evenings for studying, and I was working part-time, which all policemen and firemen do. So, I was never home.

Interviewer: The courses you are taking...the degree you're following, are they for Law Enforcement, or for something else?

Student: At the beginning I started in Law Enforcement, but as I continued on, I started to see more value in the math and English courses, and sociology.

Interviewer: A much broader aspect of our lives.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Boy, I tell you, I think we've forgotten the value of a liberal arts education.

Student: Yes, I think there is a man, a police chief, I think, Lentz, from South Euclid, who is in the paper every now and then; he is very much for education. In fact, I think most of the South Euclid police department have at least some college. They encourage it. What you learn is to handle people-I guess that's the big thing. Your attitude with people can help you deal with various situations you are faced with in my profession. You get a lot of that through college.

Interviewer: Sure. Tolerance, patience, and being able to step out of yourself and into somebody else's shoes, and say, 'Maybe I don't have all the answers.' That's my idea of an education.

Student: Right. You get a broader aspect. For example, a guy might walk out and surrender, as opposed, maybe, to a shoot-out,that is, if you can take the time to talk, reason, and console. You get much better results then going in there, knocking the door down and getting him.

Interviewer: So there's no doubt in your mind that your education has made you a better police professional, as well as a better person.

Student: Oh yes, definitely.

Interviewer: And you had what? Twenty-five years on the police force?

Student: Almost twenty-seven years.

Interviewer: And retired.

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: So you had your life as a police officer and wanted to retire and do something different. How much had you invested here-did you say one year?

Student: I'm twenty-two credits short of an associate's degree, so that would be about three quarters, or maybe a little more left.

Interviewer: Are you accelerating the pace?

Student: No, not really. I'm taking two courses now. I don't want to over-burden myself. I want to get decent grades. I don't want to take...to get myself in trouble.

Interviewer: What do you have this quarter?

Student: I have algebra and sociology.

Interviewer: Once you get your degree, what do you think you'll be doing?

Student: I think I would like to continue on to a four-year school.

Interviewer: Anything in particular-education, business?

Student: If I could, I would maybe like to get into some type of teaching. I don't know what level, but I feel teaching is rewarding. I know it is a lot of work. My sister-in-law is a teacher, and she does a lot of homework, and it is a lot of time, but I feel if you can help people...money isn't everything.

Interviewer: An uncle of mine retired from the Postal Service at fifty-seven, he did the same thing you're doing while he was in the Post Office. He said he wanted an education. A year after he retired he got his bachelor's degree, and a year after that he became a teacher-he loves it. He told me it's the best thing he ever did in his life. He says, 'I get my check from the Postal Service, and I go have fun teaching. I get paid for having fun.' I mean he works-he's a good teacher, but he enjoys it. 'John,' he says to me, I'm having the time of my life.' So, Jim, I think you might be on the right track here.

Student: I feel like I am.

Interviewer: How about your classes? You have the algebra and sociology...tough?

Student: Yes, a lot of time.

Interviewer: Don't let the algebra back you off. Everybody has a tough time with it. Get it out of the way, just muscle through it. How about the instructors here? Now you've been a good long time-have you had any lemons?

Student: One.

Interviewer: That's terrific.

Student: And he wan't a lemon, in fact, in his teaching. In fact, he was good in his teaching, but he was predujiced against certain occupations-I wasn't the one who gave him a ticket. (Loud laughter.) He got twelve tickets. He drove a red Chevy, and he would shoot up Harvard at the last minute doing 50 mph. I kind of explained to him: "Don't judge me by what happened to you," but...he was an excellent teacher.

Interviewer: Okay. Most of the others were at least good, and some excellent?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: How about the students? See, you're an older fella' and you're sitting next to these eighteen-twenty year old hotshots. Can you give me any feedback on that? Do they tolerate you? Do they work with you? Do you get any vibes from them? Are you just another student?

Student: I think I'm just another student.

Interviewer: That's the way it should be.

Student: I find that there's not too much conversation. We all go to class, and after class we all get up and we leave and everybody goes and does what they have to. There's not too much socializing It's strictly business.

Interviewer: How about when you have to do a project together?

Student: A lot of cooperation. It seems everyone is interested. It seems most of the students here want to do a good job.

Interviewer: What could we do to improve this place-to get more policemen here...to get more poeple that are out there working in here. There's a lot out there that still aren't at Cuyahoga Community College. I think they would all benefit from it-in one way or the other-they would benefit from it.

Student: Well, you could send a representative to the various districts, and at roll-call have he, or she present the various courses...I do believe-I'm not sure-but they do give incentives.

Interviewer: You have acquaintances I would guess. The people you worked with all your life; you have relatives that know you're attending college, do they ever ask you about it?

Student: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think they'll ever get here? Do they really know what's here? Have you talked about it? Do they come here?

Student: Yes, in fact, there was one non-credit course that I brought two other policemen here for. They came down and enjoyed it. I talked with a few more and asked if they wanted to come down. That would help me in a way. We could talk back and forth in math or whatever. You know, two heads are better than one. It seems like they are at least thinking about it.

Everyone I make contact with asks me, 'What are you doing now that you are retired.' When I say school, they say, 'Boy, I kind of would like to try that.' And I say, 'Well look, come on up,' You know, and I help them out as much as I can.

Interviewer: Right. You-I mean "you" figuratively-need a friend. You need a push. You need somebody to say, 'You can do it.' It is scary, you know, especially as I've said, when you have had bad experiences as a youngster. Fortunately education has changed much from those times, when it was a chore and was very rigid, as opposed to now. So much...so many ways now for you to express yourself and be a personality rather than just a passive "schoolboy"- for want of a better word.

Student: I guess years ago the instructor came in and did his thing and walked out, and you couldn't even ask him a question. Now you can get help. I just don't know how a person could function without some help.

Interviewer: Me either. How about your wife? Did she ever attend here?

Student: Yes, she took a few courses-she took medical terminology. She wants to take courses by virtue of just seeing me go; you'd be surprised how much this is influencing my children, too. They say, 'Boy, dad's over fifty-years-old and he's going to school...' It's like a pebble dropped in water-the ripples spread and catch other people.

Interviewer: Right. Jim, you've certainly helped me in what I'm attempting to do. I do appreciate this conversation. When you go on to a four-year school, you're going to need a recommendation and I hope you use me as a recommendation. I would be pleased to do so. In the meantime, I want you to stop back whenever you need to before you graduate; if I can help you out with anything I'd be glad to.

Student: Okay...you know, John, you've asked me a lot of questions about what I'm doing here, and, you know, I've wanted to talk about that; I mean what I'm doing here, to somebody for awhile now. I'm glad you asked. I hope this interview helps what you're doing-its helped me.

Interviewer: Thanks for telling me that. I appreciate your comments and the time you're given me, Jim.

Student: Sure. So long.

Interviewer: Good-bye. Jim.

1196I

EPILOGUE

A collegue of mine, a German instructor, born in Belgium, and very well traveled, I might add, said to me once that "the difference between the United States and the rest of the world is that in the United States, one can always get a second chance." The people interviewed here are making that statement ring true.

The types of student attending our colleges and universities continue to change, and are ever broadening. Originally, colleges were only accessible to wealthy and upper-middle class males; women, and less affluent men, arrived on campus around the mid-nineteenth century--today, no one blinks an eye at coeducation. It wasn't unitl the early 1960's that black Americans, throughout the country, could attend colleges with whites--today black students are commonplace. Now, older students are arriving, and as is evident in the preceding interviews, they are losing much of their selfconsciousness about attending school. As a group, these people will soon be as common and uneventful in our colleges and universities as young coeds and racial minorities are--another wave of people seeking knowledge and personal fulfillment from our educational institutions--"because a mind (at any age) is a terrible thing to waste."

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